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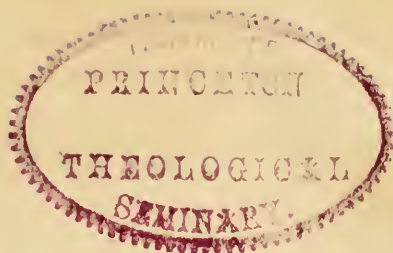
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CHAPTER I.

The present state of Clerical Education.

It has often excited surprise, that a church richly endowed like that of England, and claiming, on various grounds, a prominent place among the Protestant churches of Europe, should be destitute of any specific system of religious education for its ministers. The difference between the learning required in the church, and the means of professional instruction offered; between the actual character of the clergy, and their apparent preparation for the office, has long been one of the anomalies which abound in our con-

stitution, and has formed one of the many instances where individual exertion and personal devotion supply the deficiency in public institutions. For it would be idle as well as unjust to assert, that any real absence of professional knowledge has ever been proved against the establishment. Every succeeding age has seen the faith maintained by the learning and the industry of the clergy. Every succeeding age has seen some accessions to theological knowledge, some refinements in sacred criticism, some bulwarks raised round our common faith by their diligence and zeal. At no period has the church forfeited its character of being the source of sound learning; at no period have its members had occasion to blush for the insufficiency and ignorance of the champions whom she sent forth into the field of controversy; at no period has the cause of falsehood or of error been overwhelmed by such preponderance of strength, as when the church

raised up her force, and came forth clad in the whole armour of God, to meet the unbeliever or the sceptic. To establish this fact, it would only be necessary to refer to those volumes which are now regarded as the standards of religious truth; and whether we look back on the long protracted contest with the papists, or to that struggle with infidelity, which, in the successive fields of atheism, deism, and Socinianism, has exercised the strength, and tried the hopes of the Christian world; we shall find, with all due respect for the very valuable labours of many among the dissenters,—the more valuable, indeed, as coming from them, unsolicited save by a sense of common interests, and uncombined, save in the spirit of our common faith;—we shall find that the bulk of the force, the main strength of the army has been furnished from the bosom of the church; and a long list of names filling the highest situations and dignities in it, will supply the re-

cord of the most powerful and efficient defenders of the truth.

But while this has been confessedly the case, we feel that it has resulted from a providential combination of circumstances, rather than from any specific provision for the purpose. Theology has never been cultivated as a science, with a view to such effects. No system was organized in our universities, for the purpose of raising up such combatants, or of supplying them with the arms which they needed. The confiscated wealth of the monasteries at the period of the Reformation, was not applied to the promotion of sound learning and religious education. The existing government of the country never saw the expediency of encouraging those studies, which proposed as their object the maintenance and defence of religious truth. Political animosities and jealousies thwarted every endeavour of the kind which has been made ; and from the time of Edward VI., it is hardly possible to

specify a measure which was introduced with this view, or which was carried on to its accomplishment.

The men who did come forward on behalf of truth, were generally self-taught in all that regarded divinity. From their college studies no doubt they had derived the habit of close reasoning, accurate perception, and extensive information; they had gained, in the course of their academical education, the tone of scholars, and the application of scholars; but their attainments in theology were generally made in other places and under less favourable circumstances.

The greater part of those works to which the Christian student now refers as the standard depositories of truth, were not produced in the quarters which we might have expected; but in the busy scenes of the world, amidst the excitement of spirit produced by political or religious controversy. They were not composed to anticipate future errors, so much as for

the purpose of meeting those which had risen, and were spreading ; and the heresy which excited alarm, was generally the occasion of beginning the inquiry which led to its defeat. That inquiry, no doubt, was then commenced by minds which previous education had disciplined and prepared for controversy ; and truth was soon perceived, and powerfully maintained in religious questions, when pursued by those who had been accustomed to its investigation previously.

But under all these advances, the science was prosecuted by individuals, rather than by the community. Men came forward as they were wanted, and the call of every emergency was met by a sufficient supply ; but still the study was not pursued with the regularity which it deserved, nor did it meet with that species of encouragement which its importance required. It followed, indeed, from the desultory mode in which theology was studied, and the nature of the

patronage bestowed upon it ; that encouragement was only given where great and peculiar success had been obtained. The few individuals who obtained opportunities of distinguishing themselves, were generally met with the adequate measure of reward. Their labours were appreciated, their application was honoured ; but the few who arrived at this distinction, were nearly the whole of those who were thus employed. The great body of the clergy, conceiving themselves released from any such necessity of exertion, shrunk back from the contest ; and devolving on a few the task of contending for the common faith of all, turned their attention to other objects. By degrees this division of labour became a sort of professional rule. The scientific part of theology was separated from the practical, and was suffered to be the province of a peculiar description of persons. The circumstances in which men were placed, or the turns of their minds, were allowed

to decide the line which they adopted : and no one imagined that he was called to take up the study of divinity as a science, unless he was placed in the very neighbourhood of controversy, or was conscious of a peculiar predilection for its weapons.

The universities soon ceased to supply the means of a knowledge for which there was no demand. Their libraries offered to the few who seemed called to the study, the means of obtaining the information which was necessary ; but as this information was not to be obtained without labour, as there was nothing to facilitate its acquisition, or to encourage the pursuit, the numbers who sought it there became small ; and the great multitude even of those who were devoted to the sacred ministry, remained in quiet and unrepurchased ignorance. But while the church still sent forth her champions, while every revival of error was met by its appropriate answer, and the zeal and piety of a few individuals were supplying

the deficiencies in the system, no one ventured to suspect their existence. Some great names were always at hand, which might be brought forward to redeem the character of the establishment, and to vindicate its claim to literary and theological eminence; and while this was done, no one thought it necessary to inquire as to the source from which that knowledge was derived, or to consider the degree in which it was diffused through the whole body of the clergy.

This, however, was a state of things which necessarily grew worse. While every other science had a regular provision made for its cultivation, and theology alone was excluded from participating in such advantages; the others naturally grew and flourished, and the neglected study withered. The increased activity of the public mind, the energy of inquiry, the excitement of emulation, flowed into the channels which were already traced for their reception, and

poured out all their fulness there. In one university the sciences; in the other, general literature and logic, embraced all the attention and diligence of the rising generation. Each institution adopted its own peculiar studies; studies which it cherished by all the aids of instruction, and encouraged by its honours and rewards. To these it directed the minds of its students at their first admission; to these it guided and facilitated their progress; and these it held up, throughout their career of labour, as the objects of honourable ambition. But among these theology held no place. The one science which treats of the highest interests of man; the one science which has eternity for its field, and the Deity for its subject; the one science which includes all things necessary for every man to know, formed no part in the regular studies, was cheered by no academical distinctions, was encouraged by no rewards; was left to be acquired by the unassisted labours of the

solitary student, and hardly admitted to a place in the regular course of University studies.

The consequence of this partial arrangement was obvious and necessary: literature flourished, and theology was neglected. The increased activity of the public mind showed itself in more intense and intelligent application to the favoured studies; but its energies were confined and limited to these. Scientific researches were successfully pursued, criticism was cultivated, discoveries were made; but theology remained in a state of comparative torpor: and the studies connected with divinity, generally speaking, were either begun under the impulse of occasional excitement, or prosecuted under circumstances little favourable to calm and consistent advancement. The progress of the evil, however, was checked in a degree, and remedied by that individual feeling, which in all free institutions, is ready to rise up and

supply the defects of the general system; and it has not gone to the same extent which it would have reached under other circumstances. Truth has found champions whenever it has been assailed; and the minds which have been devoted to its service, if less prepared than might have been wished, with the peculiar literature of theology, have still brought with them the energy and acuteness which had been gained in other studies. In this way the great principles of faith have been maintained inviolate; the doctrines of the gospel have been vindicated; our ark has been preserved; and if the influence of religion has not been so widely extended as we might have wished; if scepticism, though foiled in its attacks and repulsed, still lives and threatens from a distance; we feel that our foundation stands firm, that no ground has been lost, and that we may assume the aggressive whenever we choose.

But is this the position which will sa-

tisfy the real Christian? Will he, whose heart is devoted to his Master's service, who burns with zeal for his honour and his glory, whose spirit is moved within him at the sight of the prevailing irreligion of the world, whose feelings melt in considering the souls which are being daily lost to God and to happiness,—will he be satisfied by thinking that the integrity of the gospel is maintained, and that the principles of his faith are placed beyond exception or dispute? Will he be satisfied by knowing that there are men of learning and of talent ready to check any rising invasion of infidelity, and to vindicate the truths of revelation, whenever any open or notorious attack shall be commenced? Will he not rather feel that his wishes go far beyond this sort of security? Will he not feel that this is a state of things which neither satisfies his duty to God nor to man? Will he not feel, that this cold neutral position does not answer the purposes for which the

gospel was given, for which the church was founded, nor realize the wishes of that heart into which the gospel is received? Will he not rather wish to see the kingdom of God come with power, and to see its truths and its consolations carried into every corner of the land with an energy which nothing can resist; and instead of knowing that there are some men who are capable of contending earnestly and powerfully for the faith; will he not rather desire that all the people of the Lord were prophets, and that the same degree of knowledge, which he rejoices to think is possessed by some, were generally diffused among the clergy?

Nor is this any wild or unreasonable expectation. The circumstance that the clergy exist as a separate and distinct body; the immunities they enjoy; the duties they profess; all imply the necessity of some peculiar qualifications. Education of a very expensive kind is even now considered as an indispensable prelimi-

nary ; and a regular course of academical study is required, with few exceptions, from all who enter on the ministry. The years which are passed in either university involve a great detail of every species of literature. The expense that is incurred, the labour that is exerted, exceed beyond measure the average of remuneration that is looked for ; and it would excite surprise and admiration, if a comparison could be drawn between the charges attending the preparation for the ministry, and the pecuniary reimbursement which is expected.

No one, under these circumstances, would wish to increase the expense or the length of the system of education at present pursued. In many cases, the best interests of the church are materially affected by these hindrances ; and numbers of zealous and devoted men would never have attained to the office which they coveted, if private or associated bounty did not enable them to overcome

the difficulties of contracted means, and to pass through the requisite course of college studies. All that could be contemplated in this case, would be a change in the line of study; all that could be recommended, would be such an employment of the time that is necessarily passed in the university, as might give a professional character to its studies; an opportunity offered to all of obtaining the first degree, by such attainments in theology as might be deemed a sufficient test of application, and might at the same time offer some materials for future usefulness. The examinations at Oxford have exhibited a gradual approach to this desirable object. In every successive modification of the plan, theology has assumed a more prominent place. The doctrines of the Church of England have been made familiar to the minds of every student. He has been compelled to remark their conformity with Scripture, and their dependence upon Scripture; and has

thus been prepared to give some reason of the hope that is in him, from the course of his academical reading.

The approach which has been made in this case seems to show the facility with which a more complete system of professional instruction might be generally introduced; and if the attentions of the heads of houses in either university were seriously drawn to the importance of the object, no doubt could be entertained as to the conclusion they would arrive at. A regulation, which should allow young men intended for the ministry, to substitute studies more purely professional, for those which are pursued by others, during the last two years of their residence; would offer to the future parochial clergy a means of theological knowledge which must be considered as invaluable. They might with ease, during this period, gain such a degree of acquaintance with the original languages of the Scripture, with ecclesiastical history, and with the prin-

principles of exegetic divinity, as might give a character to all their future labours, and increase their usefulness incalculably.

The universities need not apprehend that any detriment would arise to literary eminence from such an alteration. Competitors would still be found, in undiminished numbers, for all academical honours; and none of the excitement of emulation would be lost by the arrangement. In fact, it is well known that the individuals who engage most deeply in the studies of the place, are not those in general who look forward to the parochial ministry. They are mostly men who are aiming at the various employments connected with literature, or at the active situations of the world. These, therefore, would of course pursue the regular course of study, and proceed to their degrees through the usual stages. The situations to which they aspire, and which merit seldom fails of obtaining in either university, will insure to them facilities

for cultivating in later years those purely professional studies which will fit them for the sacred ministry. In these cases, therefore, the studies which are recommended in general as occupying the two years immediately preceding the first degree, may be deferred without risk of inconvenience from increased expense. It is probable also that the persons who pursue this plan, would adopt a line of theological study, differing in some respects from that which may be regarded as necessary for the parochial clergy. The situations in which they are placed, the advantages which they possess, may induce them to cultivate, in the learned leisure of colleges, those branches of divinity for which the minister of a parish has neither leisure nor opportunities. The criticism of the sacred text, the refinements of controversy, would properly form the occupation of those who remain attached to the university, and the literature of religion would become the natural pro-

vince of those who are exempt, by residence in college, from the cares and avocations of common life. At the same time, those who, from various causes, are less drawn to follow their example, and give up all idea of competition for academical honours, might be turned into a path more profitable than that in which they are at present wasting their time; and might be adopting, under the sanction of their superiors, a line of reading which would be the foundation of their future usefulness as parochial ministers.

It is, therefore, hardly possible to conceive that any injurious effect should arise from such a plan, to general study; but it is obvious that it would offer to many, who, from despair of excelling in literary attainments, are now sinking into habits of most pernicious languor, a new line of pursuit, better fitted perhaps to their habits of mind, and rendered more attractive, from its manifest bearing on their ultimate employments in life. That mass

of unprofitable indolence which now forms the shame of our public seminaries, as it unquestionably forms the burden of those who conduct them, might in this way be diminished. Studies of undeniable necessity might be placed before every individual, and the general standard of clerical attainments might be raised by no less a measure than that of two years' systematic and directed study. The bishops then might insist without fear on a higher degree of theological attainments than they are now compelled to admit. Cases of gross and deplorable insufficiency would no longer occur; many scandals might be prevented, more might be obviated; and the younger clergy, instead of shrinking from the high and important posts which they are called to fill, and sinking into despondency under the burdens of an office for which they are not prepared, would be found capable of meeting all and bearing all, through the resources which they had already accumulated

There is reason to hope that this lamentable defect in our system is in the way of being retrieved. The subject was ably and judiciously brought before the notice of the university of Cambridge by Dr. Adams, in the sermon which he preached at the commencement, 1830; and the strong and decisive language held by the Bishop of London in his charge, can hardly be read with indifference. Dr. Adams suggests anticipating the batchelor's degree by one term, and giving a full year of three terms to the study of divinity alone. The expense implied by this extension of residence will probably offer difficulties which cannot be surmounted; but the fact that such a representation has been made in such a quarter, is alone a circumstance that may encourage hope for the future.

NOTE.

IT may seem desirable to throw into the form of a note some remarks which it is necessary to introduce at this point, as to the line of study pursued by candidates for the ministry in other countries, or in other denominations among ourselves. Of the course required in the German churches I am unable to speak particularly; but no one who knows the state of German theology will suspect that any defect in erudition is included among its failures. An excess in learning, rather than a deficiency, a want of something very different from human power, is apparently needed there; and their wanderings from the truth are not the result of indolence, but of proud, self-sufficient exertion. In the Swiss churches, two years are given, at the close of the academical course, to the exclusive study of theology; and every candidate for orders is supposed capable of reading the Scriptures in their original languages, *aperto libro*. In the American episcopalian church, the full course of study in the seminary at New York

occupies three years, each year comprising two sessions—in all, about ten months in each year. None are admitted into the theological classes till they have undergone an examination which ascertains the fact of their being well acquainted with the Latin and Greek languages; and the course of theological study through which they pass, embraces,

1. Oriental and Greek literature, comprising the knowledge necessary to the critical study of the Scriptures in the original languages.

2. Biblical learning, *i. e.* every thing relating to the criticism of the sacred text.

3. Interpretation of Scripture, comprising the principles of interpretation, and the meaning and practical application of the Bible.

4. The evidences of revealed religion, external and internal; including a review and refutation of infidel objections, and also a view of moral science in its relations to theology.

5. Systematic divinity in all its branches, including a particular view and defence of the system of faith professed by the Protestant Episcopal Church.

6. Ecclesiastical history in general, and the history in particular of the Church of England, and of the North American Episcopal Church.

7. The nature, ministry, and polity of the Church, particularly of the Protestant Episcopal Church, its liturgy, rites, and ceremonies.

8. Pastoral theology and pulpit eloquence, explaining and enforcing the qualifications and duties of the clerical office, and also including the performance of the service of the church, and the composition and delivery of sermons. This last branch of study was for years under the direction of the late Bishop Hobart. He informed the friend, by whose kindness I am furnished with these particulars, that the students attended him every Saturday, during each term or session; when they were engaged for several hours in recitation, and in the delivery of sermons composed by themselves; and on certain days they read in turns, as a devotional exercise, the service of the church. These sermons, as well as the mode of reading the liturgy, and of preaching, were made the subject of the professor's remarks. The students assemble daily in morning and evening prayer; divine service is regularly celebrated, and the sacrament statedly administered in their chapel every Sunday. The students also have charge of a large and flourishing Sunday school.

At reading this ample and enlightened scheme

of study, it is impossible to avoid a feeling of regret, at thinking of the very inadequate means placed within the reach of the most zealous English student. Where indeed can we hope to see all these advantages united, except in some future Institution, such as the Bishop of London recommends in his most important charge?

The course of education pursued by the Protestant dissenters in this country is hardly less comprehensive. A short notice, given in the *Congregational Magazine* for August, 1829, which describes the classical examination held at Highbury College, may be taken as a specimen. The class of the first year were examined in the *Georgics*, the first six Books of the *Æneid*, the *Analecta Minora*, and the first book of the *Odyssey*; the second year, in the *Odes* and *Epodes* of *Horace*, three books of the *Odyssey*, and an oration of *Lysias*; the third year, in¹ *Cicero's* first, sixth, and ninth *Philippics*, the first book of *Herodotus*, and the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of *Sophocles*; and the fourth year men, in the tenth, thirteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth *Satires* of *Juvenal*, the two first books of *Thucydides*, and the book of *Job* in *Hebrew*. On the following day they were examined in *theology*, and several branches of literature;

when it appeared that they had respectively pursued a course of study in mental philosophy, ethics, civil and ecclesiastical history, the interpretation of scripture, evidences of scripture, systematic theology, Hebrew antiquities, and philology.

When we add to this sketch of the plan of study, that Dr. Henderson presides over the college at Highbury, and that Dr. Pye Smith, author of that invaluable work, "The Scripture Testimony to the Divinity of Christ," is the theological and biblical tutor at Homerton; and that both of these gentlemen, in addition to more than usual acquirements in ancient and oriental literature, are thoroughly acquainted with the works of the great German biblical critics and divines; we can have no hesitation in saying, that advantages are offered to those under their direction, superior to any which are to be found at present in either of the great Universities.

CHAPTER II.

The necessity of a regular Education for the Ministry considered, and the limits which may be assigned to it.

It is possible that the remarks which have been made above, may have awakened some considerations as to the nature of that education which is to be deemed necessary for the clergy in general; and the suggestions which have been hitherto offered, have merely proposed a mode in which present deficiencies may be removed, without stating the point it is desirable to attain. It is also possible, that the importance attached to a *regular system* of education may seem to be unfounded;

and that cases may be mentioned—cases of which it would be unjust and idle to deny the reality—where all the work of the ministry has been effected, with a peculiar measure of success, without any such preparation. No one, for instance, would deny that many souls have been converted, that extensive good and permanent good has been produced by the labours of men, who had little advantage from education; but who have exemplified the truth of Bishop Burnet's remark, that a great deal of piety with little learning, will do more than a great deal of learning with very little piety.

In reply to this last objection, it is obvious to state, that no argument is ever justly drawn from cases which must be pronounced exceptions to the general rule; to which we must add, that it is natural to expect, in this particular case, that such exceptions should be of more frequent occurrence than in any other. The sovereignty of God, the sufficiency of his grace, the wonders of his goodness

and his power, are unquestionably exhibited, from time to time, in the spiritual world, in effects for which we can discern no adequate or proportionate causes. The presumption of man is humbled by observing the changes which the grace of God produces through means which were despised; hope is encouraged in the faithful and patient by the same; and these occasional deviations from the ordinary mode of proceeding supply proofs, which the humble and awakened mind knows how to appreciate, both of the power and benevolence of God. But as men do not learn the course of nature from the study of those phenomena which suspend or interrupt it; no more is the will of the Deity to be inferred from the occasional and isolated acts of mercy which occur in his providence. That will is more clearly revealed, more certainly deduced from the general course of his dispensations, than from those which are detached; and just as it forms no exception to the general necessity of labour,

that God has sometimes fed his people with bread from heaven; so it forms no exception to the general necessity of learning in the ministry, that God has sometimes made use of ignorant but zealous men, for the purpose of reviving a spirit of religion.

But if there are some few cases of eminent usefulness, which are only to be explained and accounted for in this manner; it is also necessary to admit, that the want of education alleged is often rather imaginary than real; that it consists in the absence of qualifications which have no direct bearing on the subject; and that it is compatible with an abundant possession of those means which are most decidedly influential. A man, for instance, may be considered illiterate, if tried by the standard of human attainments, who still may be, like Apollos, mighty in the Scriptures. He may be destitute of outward graces, and still may be able to speak to the souls of his hearers with a power

which they cannot gainsay or resist. He may be ignorant of this world's wisdom, and still be deeply read in the intricacies of the human heart. He may have received none of those artificial assistances by which man endeavours to supply the want, or to increase the effect, of natural powers; and still he may have been endowed with an unction and a power from above, which shall set all the feeble imitations of man at defiance. It is easily possible to conceive a person such as this; one who should be to all appearance destitute of education, and who should still possess, in a degree which education cannot reach, that great power of moving men's minds, for which it is the office of education to prepare the preacher; and who in his Bible only, thus read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested, should have obtained just the only knowledge that is wanted for the work of the ministry; the knowledge, without which no saving effect can be produced;

but with which, when ^{fully}duly and affectionately exerted, the man, whosoever he may be, becomes at once a scribe rightly instructed unto the kingdom of heaven.

But the reply to this objection leads to the position which it now seems necessary to make; and the singular and unaccountable success which has been vouchsafed to some who possessed one qualification alone, seems to mark its great, its paramount importance in the ministerial education. With a very slight alteration, the language of Chillingworth, who says "that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of the Protestant," may be repeated, and even with greater correctness, as to the knowledge requisite for the minister. The Bible, and, we may add with safety, the Bible alone, is the learning essential to the Christian minister. Other accomplishments he will need; but he will need them only in reference to this, and in subordination to this. He will need the knowledge of

languages; but it will be merely that he may understand more accurately the meaning of the word of Scripture. He will need a knowledge of antiquities; but it will be merely that he may comprehend more fully the peculiarities of expression he meets with in the Scripture. He will need, more or less, those sciences which are usually taught under the names of logic, rhetoric, or philology; but he will only need them that he may be able to state more clearly, and to impress more deeply, through their help, the inferences he deduces from the Scripture. To enable him to extract from Scripture something of its inexhaustible riches of wisdom and of knowledge, he will need every aid which study, or experience, or learning, can afford. To enable him to meet the obstinate deceitfulness of the human heart, and to apply to the conscience those wholesome truths which it is unwilling to admit, he will need every art which the schools of rhetoricians used to offer; but

these will be merely used as means for a certain end, and they will be all sought in order that they may be turned to that purpose. The comprehension of Scripture, the interpretation of Scripture, and the application of Scripture, these will be his employments; but, under all the varieties of his work, Scripture will be the material on which he is employed; and nothing will possess any value in his eyes, nor seem to contribute to the accomplishment of his end, except it is derived from the authority of Scripture as its principle, or tends in some way or other to maintain and impress it upon others.

In conformity with this principle, by which the preparatory studies of her ministers are to be regulated, the Church of England seems herself to have been guided. She does not despise antiquity; she does not neglect those human means which may add dignity to her offices and solemnity to her worship; she does not reject the use of that light which God

kindled originally in the intellect and reason of men; but she endeavours so to use, so to employ and exercise them, that they may act in subordination to the revealed word, and display and manifest forth its powers to greater edification. In the same manner the studies of her ministers are to be applied, not to the neglect, far less to the exclusion, of the Scripture; but simply and entirely to the development of its statements, to the elucidation of its mysteries, for the purpose of inquiries carried on in the most reverential respect for its authority, and in the most entire submission to its conclusions. That sacred volume which is placed in the hands of her ministers at the moment of their ordination, is not merely the token, but it forms the substance of their future labours. Thenceforward that book is to be their all. In that, they are to trace their own credentials. In that, they are to find the terms of the reconciliation which it is

their office to proclaim to others. In that, they are to seek the remedy for the various evils which it will be their duty to combat or relieve. Nothing that they can find within that book can be neglected, for all is given by inspiration of God; and in its various applications is profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Nothing that they can say will possess authority, unless it be derived from this; and nothing which is derived from this can be rejected with impunity by those to whom it is addressed.

Look at it in whatever way they choose, the claims it possesses are paramount, are irresistible. As coming from God; as being literally his word—the word which the Creator utters to his creature man, the knowledge which infinite wisdom sees fit to communicate—what can demand such reverence? As addressed to man himself, as containing the message of reconciliation, the means by which the

sinner may find peace and acceptance with God—what can be of so much importance for men to hear? As offering comfort to those that are wretched, light to those that are in darkness, hope to those who are in despair—what can be so welcome? As opening heaven to the view of man, as unfolding the purposes of God towards ourselves; as clearing up the doubts and uncertainties of our present state by the realities of that which is to come; as raising us above ourselves, and as showing us things which are beyond all nature—what can be so glorious?

Would we indeed wish to know its real value, its real excellence; compare it, not with one only, but with all the other books which the wit or the industry of men have formed—and what will be the result? There are books, no doubt, which have done much towards increasing knowledge, enlarging the intellect, purifying the mind, and improving the state of

man ; but what would the combined effect of all appear, when weighed against the force of one single text of Scripture, resting, as it does, on its authority of the word of God ? Compared with this, what are the consolations or the advantages which other books supply, but palliatives of an evil which they cannot heal ; narcotics, which stupify the sense instead of relieving the pain ; delusions, which increase the danger by cloaking its advances ; miserable expedients, adopted by wretchedness to delay the misery which cannot be averted ; while Scripture only discovers the evil in order to apply the cure, and offers a real and positive remedy for every evil of which we are conscious.

In this way, if the Scriptures form in one sense the sum and substance of a Christian minister's attainments, in another sense they are the point to which every ray of knowledge must be made to converge, in order to produce that light

which it is his office to dispense to others. As officially charged with the exposition of the law of God, he must not only be familiar with its text; he must not only know the various materials of which the volume is composed, and the way in which they harmonize or clash with each other; but he must bring to the study of these separate portions, a mind prepared by exercise, fraught with knowledge, capable of perceiving or of extracting truth, and of exhibiting, with distinctness and with force, the truth which he collects.

Whatever may be the simplicity of the study proposed, it would be idle to suppose that a preparation like this can be accomplished without labour. Whoever considers for a moment, the nature of the materials which are thus brought before him; the infinite sublimity of the subjects of which they treat; the circumstances under which they were delivered, and under which they have been handed down; must

feel that there is not an acquirement within the reach of human intellect, not a talent or a faculty in our nature, which may not be employed, which is not required in this study. The simplicity of the object, therefore, does not imply the facility of its acquisition. So wonderfully constituted, indeed, is that record of divine truth to which our attention is called, that while the humblest intellect may comprehend something, while the slightest measure of conscientious and faithful application is sure of being met by its proportionate degree of light ; there is in it a breadth and depth, which the greatest powers and the most unbounded diligence will never be able to fathom. The way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein ; while angels still may be engaged in studying the unsearchable riches of Christ, through the mysteries they behold in his church.

If, then, we are induced to name the Bible, and the Bible only, as the minister's

appropriate learning, it must be understood that it is the Bible, as diligently studied under all the assistances which moral discipline and general literature supply ; that it is the Bible, as illustrated by philology, as analysed by meditation and study ; as considered in all its several parts, and in its application to the wants and necessities of the heart ; and, above all, as read with prayer and with reflection ; and as interpreted in the very spirit which it inculcates. To think otherwise, would be to substitute the letter for the spirit, the form for the substance ; and he knows little of the office he undertakes,—has little considered the greatness of the work, and the extent of its responsibility, who imagines that a hasty, and partial, and imperfect study of the Bible, may supersede the necessity of other acquirements, and qualify him at once for the perilous distinction of becoming a guide to others.

CHAPTER III.

The Study of the Bible considered as the substance of the knowledge required in the Ministry. The peculiar advantages belonging to this scheme.

IN proceeding to consider the study of the Bible as the peculiar employment of the Christian minister, it is obvious that we deviate in some respect from the plans which have been generally proposed. The importance of the ministerial office, an importance which no representation can over state, has induced those authors who have written on the subject, to accumulate every accomplishment and every talent in the list of the

qualifications essential to its discharge. The idea that they form of the Christian minister, resembles the portrait which is drawn by Cicero of the orator—a combination of powers and acquirements such as the world never saw in any human being. It was perhaps hardly possible for those who felt deeply the nature of the office, to state its requirements in more measured terms. They would have felt that every concession which was made to the nature of their readers, every approximation to the average standard of men, was a deduction from the honour due to God, and injurious to the interests of religion. They argued that a cause like this deserved, nay, required the exertion of every talent, the possession of every kind of knowledge, in order to be exhibited with justice ; and they determined that the model which they drew, should at least bear witness to their zeal.

But it happened here as in other cases,

that the noblest motives sometimes fail of realizing their intention, and that earnestness defeats its own purpose. The standard of knowledge, which was fixed in this case, with a reference to the importance of the question, rather than to the means of those who were to undertake it, so much exceeded the general level, that it overwhelmed the minds which it professed to direct and to assist. Young men who were anxious for some information as to the course of reading to be pursued in the two years which would occur between their leaving the University and taking orders, and who would have applied with cheerfulness to the study of a few select authors, were daunted and dispirited when a whole library was set before them. The interval which remained at their disposal was obviously insufficient for any extensive course ; and they found that the directions which they thus received were unprofitable, because they were incapable of

being applied. They needed some other directions, which should select from the copious list before them, the few volumes which they might have time and ability to master ; and if they did not succeed in obtaining these from private sources, they either sunk down in despondency at the prospect of exertions which exceeded their powers, or else caught some imperfect and inconsistent views, by promiscuously consulting the books that fell within their reach.

Though there are works therefore already before the public, which treat directly of this subject, and treat of it with a fulness and an accuracy which it is not hoped to approach at present: the peculiar circumstances of the case seem to require a smaller work, which in subordination to them, and preparatory to them, may trace a line of study, somewhat more definite, and more applicable to the case of the generality of candidates for the ministry. Those two va-

luable volumes, the *Christian Student*, by the Rev. E. Bickersteth, and the *Christian Ministry*, by the Rev. C. Bridges, supply a fund of information; and, what is of far greater value, of devout and spiritual feeling, to which every clergyman will naturally have recourse for guidance and direction. The object of the present attempt is to trace a simple plan of study, which may seem more within the reach of those who are appalled by the apparent magnitude of the course suggested in more valuable works; and to prevent the waste of the important interval of time devoted to preparation for the ministry, by supplying a scheme which all may be capable of following.

In every pursuit we are aware that something is gained by simplifying the question, by dismissing all collateral and superfluous inquiries, and by clearing the subject in discussion of every thing that may distract or divide the attention of the student. This advantage

unquestionably belongs to the studies which form the preparation for the ministry. If we can distinctly ascertain the nature of these studies ; if we can separate them from other inquiries which are extraneous or unnecessary ; if we can in this manner discriminate that which is essential, from that which is incidental ; there is no doubt that a considerable saving of time may be effected, and that the labour employed may be employed with double advantage from the manner in which it is directed. Now this appears peculiarly the case in the preparation for the office of the ministry. It possesses beyond any other pursuit the quality of unity. The nature of the office, the end to which it is directed, the means by which it is to be accomplished, are all eminently simple. One single idea conveys the nature of the office ; one single way is named as the object of attention ; one single book contains the record of the means by which all is to be accom-

plished. Nor is there any thing in the external circumstances of the individual, which can affect this character of his office. Whatever those circumstances may be, whether he be called to fill the higher dignities in the church of Christ, or to occupy its humbler posts of duty ; whether he be called to minister among those, who in the opinion of the world are wise, or among the simple and illiterate ; he has but one road before him ; he has but one end to seek ; he has but one way in which to follow it. In every position that he fills, he comes as the minister of reconciliation between God and man, with feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. To every rank in society he has but the same message to deliver ; he has but the same terms to offer, “ Repent, and believe the gospel.” To every description of men, to the high and to the low, to the wise and to the ignorant, he has but one law to publish as the rule of life. To every

moral agent he has but one way to preach as the way of salvation. In every place and in every age, there is but one record of the will of God, which it is his business to explain, to inculcate, and apply, and this therefore must supply the substance as it does the authority of his doctrines. The Christian minister then should labour to fix strongly on his mind, the real character of the scriptures which he is commissioned to teach, and the universal value of the parts they are composed of. He should remember that they not only include, in a general sense, the credentials of his office, the message with which he is intrusted ; but he should also remember, that every line may contain some statement or some modifications of the will of God, which he is ordained to publish ; he should remember that all was given by inspiration ; and that man can never be justified in neglecting that which his Maker has been pleased to utter. The authority which

Scripture derives from its original, should never depart out of his mind ; its sacred character, its essential majesty as the word of God, its inestimable value as the way of salvation—all these qualities should ever be present, either when he is applying to the study in private, or using the truths which it conveys, as part of his public ministration.

There is reason to fear, that for a long time the word of God has not been met with this peculiar and specific reverence. Men have been occupied with commentaries, when they ought rather to have been searching the original. Indolence has flattered itself with the idea of arriving at truth in a more compendious way, through the inquiries of other men. Great names have been used to justify this illusion ; and men have hoped to enter rapidly into the labours of others, by adopting their conclusions, instead of seeking simply and earnestly for truth, through prayer and study of the Bible.

In this way the systems of men, and the opinions of men, if not the commandments of men, have sometimes been taught instead of the doctrines of scripture. The truths of revelation have been proclaimed with more of system and less of freedom, than properly belongs to them; and the statement, which in the writings of the commentators retained something of its original strength, has been a still fainter and feebler copy, when taken into the hands of those who proceeded in this way to explain and to apply them. But surely we must be aware that men act in a very different manner from this, with regard to human laws. The advocate does not cite the comment, but the statute: the physician, the artist, refer to the rules of their science, instead of resting on the explanations. They know the value of certainty where authority can be had; and instead of substituting conjectural for ascertained truths, they go to the foun-

tain-head of knowledge, and each desires to be the commentator for himself. But in the study of theology, the reverse has too often been witnessed. The importance of the cases involved, the haste under which the decision was too often to be formed, have induced men to study the record of the Scriptures through the medium of explanations and notes, in order to arrive at its meaning more expeditiously. In this way, the real use of the commentary has been forgotten. Instead of being made subsidiary to the original, it has occupied the place of the original. Instead of being the interpretation of the oracle, it has been consulted as the oracle itself; and the consequence has been, that the inferences drawn, and the answers received, have been vague, and cold, and ineffective. A more regular preparation for the ministry, a more serious consideration of its nature and of its duties, might have obviated this evil. A man who had di-

gested the whole body of Scripture, and who from long familiarity had become acquainted with its mind, would never have adopted this mode of resolving his doubts, while the source of truth itself was within his reach. He would naturally have preferred the authority of the word of God, whenever he knew that it might be quoted without danger of contradiction; and would thus have avoided a course, which was only recommended by its ease. His statements in this way might have been less guarded, but they would also have been less vague and general: and while practice added correctness to his judgment, it would never have been deficient in that authority, which can only be derived from the certainty of truth.

The first then, we might almost add the last, part in the preparation for the ministry, seems to be a deep, and full, and accurate knowledge of the Scripture. The scripture read, marked, learnt, and

inwardly digested, forms the peculiar qualification for him who aims to be "a scribe, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven." Without this, a clergyman can do nothing, nothing effectual, nothing as it ought to be done, let his other accomplishments be what they may. With this, he may, he will, he must be a minister of good, a means of grace to many, whatever may be his lack of literary attainments.

Without this, he may excite the natural feelings, he may amuse the imagination, he may touch the heart; but he never can speak with the power of a servant of God, nor ever exhort and rebuke with all authority, as becomes his office. Without this, he may produce, under favourable circumstances, a transient effect; he may use the general truths of the Gospel, as a means of artificial excitement; but he never can win souls to Christ, nor prove himself a wise master-builder, by the endurance and stability of

his work. But with this single power, though destitute of every other, he may be like the youthful David, a glorious instrument in the hands of God, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Nor is it difficult to mark the reason of this difference of effect. Whenever a man adopts another mode of speaking, whether it be argument and reason, or that species of oratory which addresses itself chiefly to the feelings, he speaks only from himself; he merely produces the conclusions of his own mind, the results of his own reflections. The authority belonging to his statements is therefore simply human. They may be listened to with attention, if they are strong; they may be received with interest, if they are luminous or brilliant; or with feeling, if they are pathetic; but each of his hearers is unconsciously sitting in judg-

ment on what he utters, and considering the degree of attention to be paid to it, instead of listening in order to learn and to obey. In this way a man may affect, may persuade, may touch, but he cannot command; and the very word of God, which he is commissioned to promulgate, lies useless and dormant, in hands which prefer the use of an inferior weapon.

Again, it follows from the very nature of moral instruction, that its statements must be general. Moral evidence does not reach the exactness of demonstration, nor can moral truth be taught with universal, undeviating strictness. Differences in situation, differences in knowledge, will require different applications of truth; and he who does not speak to the conscience with authority, as speaking from revelation, is obliged to avoid all that is strong, all that is peculiar in his teaching, in order to avoid painful and unnecessary collision with the consciences of his hearers. This was eminently the

failing of those great and learned men who are known under the name of the Latitudinarian Divines, and who, to the injury of the church, quitted the high vantage ground of Scripture, and came down to combat on the field which their adversaries themselves had chosen. All that could be hoped for there, was a drawn battle. An effectual pursuit was impossible in a region so filled with resources for the fugitive; and there accordingly the interminable fight has been carried on ever since between truth and falsehood; and there it may be prolonged indefinitely, while the enemy, broken and discomfited in successive contests, still knows that he has ever some shelter in which he can take refuge.

But Scripture abhors generality. The word of God is described as “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discerner of the

thoughts and intents of the heart ;” * and Scripture, instead of resting on statements without application, and offering truth without pressing its acceptance, never states a doctrine without applying it to the heart, nor exhibits truth except for the purpose of showing its necessity. In this way it cuts off every unfounded hope, speaks with the uncompromising decision of infinite wisdom, addresses each individual by speaking through the medium of conscience, and plainly tells to all what must be believed and must be done, in order that they should be saved.

The man then, who, in the discharge of his duties as a minister, prefers reasoning or moral suasion to the simple use of the word of Scripture, seems to act in contradiction to every received rule. The advocate at the bar, who knows that he has law on his side, will never endanger his cause by consenting to argue its merits on general principles. He knows on the

* Heb. iv. 12.

contrary, that any such discussion would be superfluous where the letter of the statute has decided the question, and he shuns it as a symptom of weakness. The ambassador who comes charged with the terms of an amnesty which he is commissioned to proclaim, will never be arguing the expediency of submission, when he knows that he has his sovereign's ultimatum in his hand. Either of these men would feel that their conduct was unreasonable and wrong, if they neglected the certainty which they had in their possession, for the precarious result of argument or persuasion; and are glad to decide the conclusion of their hearers by an authority which admits of no doubt. Why then should he, who comes as an ambassador from God; why should he, whose office it is to speak as from the oracles of God—why should he lay aside the powers he is charged with, and lower himself to the arts and usages of other men? Why should he neglect the credentials he is

clothed with, the seal with which he is trusted, and drop those pages which bear the mighty stamp of their original in the words, "Thus saith the Lord," for the sake of arguments which possess no paramount authority? Why should he be urging motives which may be met by counter reasoning, or which are open to cavil; when he has in his hand those which are raised above exceptions?

Alas! is it not obvious, that while men have been engaged in this lengthened, fruitless course, time has been passing, souls have been perishing, and breaches many and wide have been made upon the church of Christ? Is it not notorious, that the victories gained in this mode of proceeding, have been few, and questionable, and undecided? The regular may have been made more regular; the moral, the intellectual part of mankind may have been amused, enlightened, or confirmed in the paths they had chosen; but no brands have been plucked from

the fire, no sinners have been converted, no inroads have been made on the kingdom of ignorance and vice; and Satan may have seen with satisfaction the energies of the Christian world exerted in a form, which would never endanger the security of his empire.

But it is otherwise with the word of God. From that there is no appeal; against that there is no resistance to be offered. Men must either be convinced and believe, or must throw off the self-delusion of religion together with its semblance. In this case, they cannot protect their disobedience by a long-protracted combat; they cannot be defending their sins by disputing the authority which condemns them. The contest must be at once decided; and they must soon be made to feel that the Scriptures are to them the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

CHAPTER IV.

Different plans of study which have been recommended, considered. The method already suggested, shown to be preferable; and the objections, that it is deficient in system, or may lead to latitudinarianism, answered.

It still may be urged against this view of the study of theology, that it labours under the insuperable fault of want of system. The nature of the sacred volume itself, composed of a variety of parts, and those parts joined together according to rules which are not always obvious or satisfactory; some of them historical, some didactic; some poetical,

others prose ; in general following chronological order in their arrangement, and in some particulars deviating from it : these circumstances may be named as a source of inevitable confusion and error to the student, who takes the Bible as his plan of study.

There are two other modes of proceeding ; of which the one deserves attention from the authority which recommends it ; and the other from its general adoption ; but neither of which seem free from objections of still greater weight than those which may be urged against this. The first of these methods proceeds on the idea, that the student may commence the study of divinity, with a mind exempt from all pre-conceived ideas on the subject. He is to take up his Bible as he would any other book which treats of a new science, and to begin his theological labours with examining the claims which the book possesses, and the genuineness and authenticity of its parts. The

obvious objection to this plan, is its impossibility; the utter impossibility that, in a Christian country, such a state of mind should ever be really and truly brought to the study in question; or that the attempt to produce it should be any thing more than a fiction devised for the purpose, an imaginary rather than an actual frame of mind. By the time of life when men have gone through their preparatory courses of education, and are beginning to enter upon theology, they must have adopted a system of belief which is incompatible with this philosophical state of indifference. If education, if example, if the influence of parental piety, has not already decided their opinions to the side of truth, the interval cannot have been passed in neutrality, and the enemy will have been stocking the ground with tares, which has not been occupied with wheat. However specious, therefore, the idea may seem of commencing the study at once, and from a given point, the practice

is impossible. The study has been begun unconsciously at a much earlier period. The mind has taken a bias which must effectually prevent all such impartiality of consideration as is supposed, all such rectitude of judgment as is essential to the discovery and reception of truth ; and men would only deceive themselves, if they thought that it was possible to begin the study of theology with minds which should combine the maturity of ripe reason with the simplicity of childhood.

Another objection, and one which in the present case seems insurmountable, arises from the circumstances of those to whom it must be recommended. That time is short, and art is long, is the reflection excited in the mind of every student when he contemplates the extent of science, and compares it with the period he can devote to its pursuit ; but the time which can be given by the parochial clergy to studies purely profes-

sional, must of necessity be more limited than that which is at the disposal of the general scholar. In their cases, therefore, much which it is desirable to know, must be taken for granted. Other men have laboured, and they must be thankful if they are permitted to enter into their labours; nor can it be thought requisite for them to ascertain, by personal inquiry, the truth of facts which have been already proved beyond the limits of reasonable doubt. A general acquaintance with the foundation of their faith is all that can be expected from them. The critical discussion of points connected with these must be devolved on others who possess leisure and opportunity for such inquiries; while they must give the whole of the little time they can command, to questions of indispensable necessity and daily application. Though this long and regular scheme of study, therefore, might be desirable for the clergy if it were practicable, it could

hardly, under any circumstances, be regarded as practicable for the parochial minister. His time is too precious to be spent in such abstractions, and happily his work does not require such refinements in order to its performance. A field, white already to the harvest, is already spread before him, and is calling for his presence. Every day that passes may see some precious ear shedding its produce, if he delays his hand; and into that field he is not required to carry the lancet of the surgeon, or the apparatus of the philosopher. The sickle of the labourer is the instrument he will have to wield in doing his Master's work; and perseverance, and diligence, and patience are the qualities he will want in his professional duties, rather than critical acuteness, or profound learning.

The other system which is more generally adopted, commences the study of divinity with the doctrines of any particular church, and uses Scripture chiefly as

supplying the confirmation and illustration of the positions which are laid down in them. This plan of study is usually recommended on the grounds of its superior facility, and its superior certainty. It is urged, that in adopting this course, the mind is never exposed to the danger of running into erroneous views ; but is gradually formed to the standard which is wished, and cast, as it were, into the shape most agreeable to truth. The conclusions, likewise, to which the student arrives in this way, are those which he will subsequently have to admit, and to maintain as a minister of the church of England ; and they are such as may be unhesitatingly admitted, since they exhibit nothing but what is sound and authoritative.

Compared with this, the attempt of reaching the same standard of religious opinion by a general study of Scripture, is objected to as being circuitous, and not totally devoid of danger. It is urged

that truth is hid so deeply, and surrounded with questions so embarrassing to the mind of a youthful inquirer, that it would be rash and presumptuous to seek it at once from the Scriptures; and that time would be lost, and labour wasted, in the endeavour to collect it from the midst of materials which exclude all idea of system through the circumstances under which they were formed.

The objection will be found more specious than real, whenever it is calmly considered. In every course of study, there is no doubt but system, or rather method, must be diligently observed. The absence of method will occasion the loss of time, and include the risk of forming many rash and ill-founded conclusions. The absence of system will produce an irregular, uncertain knowledge, and leave the mind open to perplexities and doubts. But it behoves us to bear in mind that there is a danger on either side. There may be too much, or there

may be too little of system. Some subjects admit of more, some admit of less; and the attempt at a very close and accurate system may be as detrimental to the cause of truth in some cases, as it would be favourable to it in others. It seems hardly necessary to prove that the subject before us is one of those, which by its very nature must scorn the trammels of system, and must suffer most deeply from any unreasonable and anxious endeavour to impose them. The truths which revelation discloses, and which it is the province of theology to discuss, must from their very nature exceed the comprehension of man; and though it is impossible that he should suppose that they are without a plan; and though it is hardly possible that he should not see the plan to which they belong, and of which they form the parts; he cannot pretend to grasp them all at once, or to decide with confidence as to the proportions that they bear with regard to the

whole scheme. That beautiful harmony which does exist in fact, and forms the essential character of truth, can no more be properly learned from a mere system of divinity, than the loveliness of the human form could be inferred from a skeleton. It must be gathered, and be gathered gradually, from the Bible. It must be studied in the several parts of which the Bible is composed. It must be learned from the way in which they modify each other; and will finally be gained, with most certainty, by an accurate acquaintance with all and each of these, taken not separately, but considered in their union with each other.

If a student, therefore, begins with system, there is great danger that he may never rise to the freedom and the fulness of truth. His views may be cramped, his judgment be distorted, his whole scheme of divinity be narrowed and humanized by setting out on such a plan; just as there is danger that his time may

be wasted, and his knowledge unproductive if he neglected system altogether, and forgot that it was the end to which his researches were finally to lead him. The plan which should avoid either extreme; which should begin by tracing the outline faintly, and should gradually increase in precision and in accuracy with increasing knowledge, seems the thing to be desired; and it is not too much to say, that these conditions are literally fulfilled in Scripture. The first few chapters of Genesis exhibit a sort of vision of the whole of religion. The man who has mastered these at the beginning of his course, has gained a key which may be used to unlock every succeeding mystery in the other dispensations he will read of; and if he really carries in his mind the facts which are there described, and the prophecies which there are uttered; he will be at no loss to account for the reason of the various surprising events which follow. The scheme

of redemption gradually unfolds itself to his view, as he advances through the Bible ; at first dimly seen through the distant patriarchal prophecies ; then more sensibly described in the types and emblems of the Jewish law ; and then proclaimed with clearer tones by successive prophets, till the full day breaks forth in the gospel. In a scheme thus gradually advancing to complete development, and actually gaining development from every successive dispensation, it is not too much to say, that there is enough of system to regulate a course of study. A plan is exhibited which includes every doctrinal truth, and under which, every scriptural statement may find its proper place. A plan is exhibited, no less, no other, than the very plan which the Deity has pursued in effecting the object He had in view, the redemption of man ; and if this plan of study seems less correct, less systematic than that which is usually proposed, we may perhaps feel, that it

is on that very account better suited to the intellect of those by whom it is handled ; and that imperfect beings are hardly fitted for any system which pretends to more perfect accuracy.

Let the student of divinity then begin with his Bible, and use that at least as the syllabus of his course, and he will have no want of system to complain of. He will there have the scheme of redemption sketched before him, not by the hand of man, but by the Spirit of truth. Let him be content, likewise, to take what he finds there, as it is, and as he finds it, nor yield to the prurient curiosity which tempts him to pry into that which God has hidden from man. Let him leave the eternity which precedes, and the eternity which is to follow, in the obscurity which belongs to it, nor wish to be wise above what is written. The rising pride of his intellect may be humbled by the limit thus placed on its inquiries. The conviction of his ignorance

and weakness may be frequently and painfully impressed upon his mind ; he will be unable to gratify his own imagination, or that of his hearers, by a clear detail of the whole of God's purposes towards man ; but his walk may be all the safer, and his labours not less fruitful on this account. The message of reconciliation may be urged with as much effect, the blessedness of a holy godly life may be inculcated as forcibly, as if he were able to lift up the seals of God's decrees, or to describe, with the faculties of an eye-witness, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

The diffidence of statement which will naturally follow from this consciousness of limited knowledge, will suit best with the condition of those whom he addresses, and the nature of his own state. The presumption of the self-righteous, the bold speculations of the visionary, the empty curiosity of the mere inquirer, will find no food, no encouragement, in

the views which he promulgates; but those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be fed; those who mourn will be comforted; those who are inquiring the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, will be directed; those who are sunk in the lethargy of indifference will be awakened; and of all the real servants of God, not one will fail of having his portion of meat in due season. And who shall say that a ministry calculated to produce such fruits as these, is deficient in any essential requisite? Who shall deny, that the man, who, dwelling on the truths which are revealed, leaves those which God has reserved to himself, in the shade which infinite wisdom has ordained they should remain in, is a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven; and while he brings forth out of his treasure, things both new and old; while he illustrates, confirms, and proves God's present dealings with his people, by the light of those which

are past, what does he leave to his people to require, or which of them will fail of receiving his portion in due season?

But it may be objected, on another ground, that a scheme like this is of too latitudinarian a cast; and that it is inconsistent with the reverence and attachment due to the principles of the church, to begin the study of divinity without immediate reference to her formularies and articles of religion. The objection would have greater weight, if there were any one principle or doctrine of the church of England which was not founded on Scripture, and which did not derive from Scripture the authority it possesses. The felicity of members of the church appears peculiarly to be this, that nothing is required from them which is not read in Holy Scripture, nor which may be proved thereby: and while the church of Rome, conscious of the fatal deviations it has made from the one foundation of truth, shrinks with

a sort of instinctive dread, from any approach to a standard which would prove the extent of its departure, and lead to its subversion; it seems to be the privilege of a Protestant to proceed with confidence in a study which will make him a better churchman, as well as a more enlightened Christian; and strengthen his attachment to his brethren as well as his love for God. In point of doctrines, then, the minister of the church of England looks fearlessly to Scripture, as the source he is to draw from. The articles of his church profess to be no more than deductions drawn from Scripture. Acquaintance with Scripture soon proves that this claim is well founded, and that the formularies of his church only echo back the truths which are revealed in Scripture. But it is also his peculiar privilege to recognize in his articles the same generality of statement, the same comprehensive scheme, the same exemption from the narrowness of human views, which he

had remarked before in Scripture. Nothing seems bound there, which had been loosed before ; nothing is left loose there, which had been bound ; nothing is asserted there, which he has not already seen asserted in the word of God ; nothing is neglected there, which has been revealed as necessary to salvation. His views may be rendered clearer by the manner in which these truths are now presented ; his conclusions may be accelerated by remarking their coincidence with all that he has collected ; but he will turn from the articles to Scripture with a confirmed impression of their truth ; or, he will look from Scripture to the articles, in order to express his own inferences more distinctly in the language which he meets with there. Attempts no doubt have been made, at various times, and by different persons, of which it would be difficult to deny the injurious tendency, to substitute the word of Scripture for every authorized confession. But no such mea-

sure is supposed here. The formularies of the church are not to be superseded by the Bible ; but the character of those formularies is to be vindicated, and their power learnt, by a previous study of those Scriptures, which they cite as the source of their authority. Creeds and confessions are not to be thrown aside, as superfluous or unnecessary ; but men are to be taught their necessity, are to be made to feel their importance, by acquaintance with the truths which were originally revealed in Scripture, but are summed up and stated there. Nothing is proposed, in short, more than what regularly occurs in the course of nature. The effect is to follow the cause. The conclusion is to be drawn when the premises have been learnt ; and instead of anticipating the result of religious inquiry, by adopting, at once and without examination, the authorized statements of doctrine, the mind is to be led to those conclusions, by that general acquaintance with the whole of

revealed truth, which must, with almost universal contingency, produce them.

In a system of study projected on this plan, there is nothing that can properly be called latitudinarian. No doubt a certain degree of liberty is offered to inquiry; no doubt the mind is allowed to investigate truth with freedom; but it does not behove truth to deprecate such a scrutiny, nor can any real advantage be gained by deferring it. This is an inquiry which, sooner or later, must be made by all, unless obviated by a slavish subjugation of the intellect; and which, if it is begun later, we know must be carried on under circumstances little favourable to its successful progress. The mind, if upright and honest, naturally suspects the integrity of those conclusions to which it is guided by the bias of authority; scans with a morbid jealousy the nature of its own convictions, when they tend to the side of self-advantage; or else is tempted, as we know from affecting

narratives is frequently the case in the church of Rome, to prolong the assent of ignorance by the silence of hypocrisy or the sophistry of unbelief.

If any thing like latitudinarianism, therefore, is ever to be admitted in the ministerial studies, let it be in the preparatory stages. Let the inquiries which are made there, be subject to no other limit than those which sound criticism and a well-regulated heart impart. Let them be carried on with the freedom of a mind which is honestly seeking for truth, and with the humility of a mind conscious of its own weakness and dependance. Let them be pursued with diligence, but with diligence sanctified by that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom; and from inquiries such as these, thus free from the usual causes of obliquity and error, what can the cause of truth expect, but the most hearty and conscientious acceptance; an acceptance grounded on conviction, and strengthened by the scope

and bearing of the studies which produced it?

Studies such as these, far from leading to uncertainty and doubt as to essential points of doctrine, form the only foundations for a firm uncompromising faith. The man who has been accustomed to shrink from this free and liberal discussion, and has been taught to view truth under one aspect only and in only one direction, may be staggered when he hears of the diversity of opinions which prevail on the same subject, and which are held with unquestionable sincerity by others. He may be tempted to regard the least deviation from the view he had himself adopted, as impeaching the integrity of the subject of his belief; and will be overwhelmed by the multitude of his opponents, if all are to be considered as such who differ from him in the way in which they describe the truth which they believe in common. Certainty, in the case of such a person, can only be gained

by the sacrifice of independence and of candour. He must resolve not to think, in order to be free from doubt; and will live in the continual fear of meeting with some new statement, which must shake the stability of his own conclusions, if it is admitted as reasonable or just. But who would prefer the exactness and rigour which might be gained by such a process, to the confidence of one who has surveyed the whole of revelation, and allowed the full and proper weight to each of its component parts; who has entered on the study with the conviction, that he was about to contemplate a depth and width of wisdom which no finite intellect is capable of comprehending; who was disposed to admit all he met with in the sacred record, in its plain literal sense; and who, expecting that he should find in it many things exceeding the limits of his understanding, was still ready to believe that all might be reconciled in the wisdom of God, though he himself was incapable of per-

ceiving the agreement at present ; who, in this way, was equally prepared to yield to truth and to resist the doubt ; to give the truth its proper value, and to assign the doubt to its proper cause ; and who can find in the largeness of Christian wisdom, respect for those who differ from him in their views of truth, without any diminution of confidence in his own ?

CHAPTER V.

Interpretation of Scripture. The different means that may be made use of for this purpose, and the assistance that may be obtained in each. Commentators, works of criticism.

THE Bible, then, presents itself as the proper subject for the Christian minister's studies. Of this we may say with fuller justice, than was said of models of literary taste, "Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ." All that the minister wants, all that he has to say, all that he has to do, is to be found here. The message which he has to communicate, the arguments by which it is to be pressed, the authority by which it is to be

supported, are all included in this book. Let him but make this book his own, comprehend its bearing, embrace its views, imbibe its spirit; and he then will be a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

But this work is not without its difficulties. It is not possible that a book produced under similar circumstances, composed of Revelations made at various times, and to various persons; treating of subjects the most awful and mysterious, conveyed to us through the medium of language no longer in common use, and open to all the varieties of interpretation which belong to such a record, should offer no difficulty to any mind, or be equally clear to all. We might reasonably hope that all should be capable of understanding that, which was necessary to be known by all; and we have the express encouragement of prophecy for hoping, that no earnest, humble inquirer after truth will be disappointed

in his pursuit.* But there is obviously a difference between the case of him who merely seeks knowledge for his own guidance, and that of him who seeks it for the professed purpose of guiding others. The former case is simple and plain : one series of wants is proposed ; one application of the word of truth may be sufficient for its relief ; the man knows his own ailment, and can feel when it is met. The case is different where a variety of moral conditions are to be examined, and where the state of many is to be considered. Self-experience here offers no assistance, or merely rises to conjecture. A wider knowledge of Scripture, and a deeper acquaintance with the human heart, will be needed ; for the minister cannot venture to hope that the state of all shall be alike, or that all minds should be open to the arguments which are found conclusive in the case of some.

Hence arises a new view of his duty

* Isaiah xxx. 21 ; xxxv. 8.

as an interpreter of Scripture. Scripture he has to apply; but in order to apply it usefully, he must know how to interpret it properly, to deduce the proper sense, to draw the natural inference, and to feel that the doctrine which he inculcates is really the doctrine of Scripture, and not an imagination of his own, which he has grafted on the letter of it. And here it is important to mark the difference between the studies of the minister, and those of the private Christian. The mercy of God has ordained that conviction should invariably follow a humble and faithful application to the word of truth, under circumstances which in other respects might seem most unfavourable to the acquisition of knowledge; and we are compelled continually to remark with astonishment and delight, the manner in which the inquiries begun and carried on in this spirit are guided to the truth, even in questions where the learned and wise are lost in perplexity and doubts.

But we cannot but feel that the case of one who is called to minister to others, differs materially from that of common individuals. We can conceive that in them one single test of truth is sufficient, the reference to a conscience awakened and enlightened by the grace of God. We can conceive that in them the testimony of the Spirit, testifying with their spirit, might ascertain the great subject of inquiry; and that dismissing all attempt at explaining what they felt, they might satisfy themselves with the conclusion of the man who had received his sight; "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." But this cannot be the case with him, whose office it is to apply to others the truth which is to produce conversion; and who therefore in his proceedings towards them, or in his inferences with respect to them, cannot be guided by that testimony of conscience, and that inward witness of the

Spirit, which he may have felt was all-sufficient in himself. It will not do for him even to refer to his own experience, and imagine that the case of one is the case of all. It will not do for him to employ on every person the same system which he has found profitable to himself; and endeavour to repeat on others a process which may have taken place in one. He must be acquainted, not merely with his own mind, but with that which may be regarded as the mind of Scripture; and must be so far master of its whole system as to be able to supply to each particular case the assistance which it needs, and which its own peculiar circumstances may require. "The priest's lips," we are told, "should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts."* All that God has revealed to man is entrusted to the minister by the very conditions of his office; and all that is entrusted to him for

* Malachi ii. 7.

this purpose, he must be capable of dividing and imparting to others.

Nor again must we suppose that the general diffusion of the Scriptures, the facilities offered to all of examining and inquiring for themselves into the record of salvation, make any material alteration in the minister's office. It is true that he no longer has any exclusive privilege of dispensing the word of God. All who hear him are capable, equally capable perhaps with himself, of applying to the Scriptures for instruction ; and all are commanded, and in duty bound to seek it there. But he knows little of men, who imagines that either the permission to possess the Scriptures, or even the injunction to search the Scriptures, will supersede the necessity of the ministerial office. Of all who are permitted or commanded to read them, many will not avail themselves of the permission, nor comply with the injunction. Of the few who do so, still fewer will employ their

powers properly ; will read so as to profit by what they read ; or will deduce, even from the study of the Bible, that simple and collected view of divine truth, on which alone “ pure and undefiled religion ” can be raised. Their application to the pursuit too often will be found to have been formal, languid, or irregular. It will have been begun under motives of excitement, or carried on in a spirit on which no blessing can be hoped. The inferences drawn, the system imagined, will bear the marks of the circumstances under which they were formed. Their knowledge will require revision, their views correction ; and their general impressions of Scripture truth must be submitted again and again to the influence of a mind more experienced in comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and more acquainted with the intricacies of error to which human weakness is exposed.

If a Christian congregation therefore can no longer be considered as entirely

dependant on their minister for that bread of life which came down from heaven ; if the Bible is so generally distributed as to become the sort of common possession of man ; it does not follow that he, whose office it is to dispense it, is exonerated from the duties of his calling. Much still remains to be done in the way of doctrine, of reproof, of correction, of instruction in righteousness. The duties of the ministry are altered rather than suspended by the circumstances under which it is to be exercised ; and as wide a field of labour is opened, in guiding the vague and perverse inquiries of men ; as there would have been in simply delivering, as the prophets did of old, the oracles of God to an ignorant, but submissive people. It is not therefore merely acquaintance with Scripture, but knowledge of the whole Scripture, which constitutes the qualifications for the office now. It is not merely familiarity with the language, and facility in quotation,

though either of these are most important qualifications, which fill up the whole of a minister's accomplishments. Beyond these, he must be expected to possess that general view of the revealed will of God, which nothing but long and persevering study of the whole Bible can produce. He must not only be familiar with its language, but he must understand the weight and the bearing of that language. He must not only be familiar with the text, but he must know how to combine and to apply it, and to deduce from passages which appear at variance with each other, the simple harmony of truth.

Unless he is capable of doing this, the conclusions which he draws for himself may be erroneous; nor will he be able to fulfil his office of redeeming and correcting the errors of others who are under him. Unless he is capable of doing this, those statements which he is compelled to make, those statements of doctrine which in his case cannot be confined to his own

breast, and be slowly and gradually moulded to the standard of truth; but which he must publicly and continually profess, will be deficient in consistency and soundness. Appointed to lead the blind, he will be found blind himself; and instead of guiding others into truth, he may be unconsciously assisting their departure.

We cannot then but feel, that that measure of scriptural knowledge which is sufficient for others, may be found very far below the requirements of the ministerial office; nor do we magnify the nature of that office, in saying that the knowledge by which others may be made wise unto salvation, is not all that is needed there. A wider acquaintance with the record of truth, a more ample view of its bearing upon others, a deeper knowledge of its meaning, a more perfect understanding of the mind of Scripture, is necessary for him, whose office it is to give to each of his Lord's servants their portion in due season, than for

others ; and we cannot but feel, that that limited and imperfect view of truth, which in the case of many humble and sincere believers, has been guarded from the consequences to which it might have led, and been blessed to their salvation, would have been a very perilous and inadequate foundation for a public ministry of the word.

That office involves not merely the feeling of the power of the truth ; not merely that secret interpretation of the word, by which the Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us ; but likewise, that interpretation of the word, by which man communicates to others the insight he has gained into his Maker's will ; and leads them, if not to the same feelings, at least to the same views and knowledge with himself. And while all possess the Scriptures, all are authorised to look for the right interpretation of Scripture, to him whom they behold as their minister. In this way we

might say, that after the preliminary steps have been passed, after a general acquaintance with the text of Scripture has been gained, a new labour will then begin, that of interpretation of the Scripture. The process will succeed by which the precious ore may be extracted from the materials which have been collected; and by which the truths of Scripture may be exhibited in their purest form and in their justest application.

With regard to the interpretation of Scripture, two courses present themselves. The first, the most common, the easiest, and in some respects the safest, consists in the interpretation of the text by means of commentaries or notes. In these we have the embodied results of the inquiries instituted by men of learning, industry, and piety; in these we are put in possession of the experience and conclusions of preceding generations, and are allowed to enter at once into the labours of those who have ex-

erted themselves most effectively in the same field.

The other course, the less common, the less easy, and in general the less safe, begins with a study of the principles of interpretation, and consists in an application of these to the text of Scripture.

The first method, is that which has been most generally made use of in this country : the other has been chiefly cultivated on the continent. The first comes recommended by the sanction of the great names which are thus brought forward as authorities : the latter possesses the advantage of a nearer and more immediate reference to the source of truth itself. The first, perhaps, imposes too much restraint on the activity of the mind : the other gives too wide a scope to its conjectures. The one is in danger of producing tameness, and an excessive deference to human opinions : the other of leading to vague and inconsistent speculation. Each probably

would be more useful if exercised in combination with the other ; nor need they ever be considered as incompatible.

The habit which has been established in this country of referring for every difficulty to commentators of established reputation, renders it unnecessary to dwell on the superior advantages which in general attend this system. It may not however be useless to remark, that there are advantages attending the other mode which are not to be overlooked or neglected. The attempt at making Scripture its own interpreter, tends to form and to preserve a reverence for Scripture. It naturally produces a habit of searching Scripture, of meditating on Scripture, of digesting Scripture, which alone may lead to very important results. It is calculated likewise to strengthen the mind by the exercise which it involves ; and it must lead to a general acquaintance with the text, to facility in referring to particular passages, and in comparing one with

another, which seems to be of all accomplishments the one most to be desired for him who is to preach the gospel.

But if interpretation of Scripture is to be chiefly carried on by the means of commentaries, it is necessary that the student should well understand the character of the author to whose guidance he commits himself. He should be aware of the peculiarities of doctrine, of the peculiarities of manner and of statement, he will meet with in each : he should always remember, that in passing from the text to the comment, he is passing from the word of God to that of men ; from that word in which there can be no error, to that in which there may be error of every kind ; and instead of lending a full and entire submission to the interpretation which he meets with, he must not so completely surrender the independence of his mind, as to take for certain the view which is presented, till he feels that that view is founded upon truth, and sup-

ported by its harmony with other parts of Scripture.

Each of the great commentators, whose works are in general circulation, possesses failings or merits peculiar to himself. All may be consulted with advantage, if consulted with discretion; but nobody perhaps will be disposed to assert of any one, that it precludes all necessity of referring to others. The series of commentaries which is usually arranged together under the names of Patrick, Lowth, and Whitby, contains unquestionably much of sound learning and useful information; together with merits of a higher kind in Lowth's notes on the Prophetic Books; but at the same time it is obviously and greatly deficient in that warm and lively application of divine truth to the heart, which forms the essence of religion; and this deficiency is most deeply felt, in that portion of the Bible where it might be least expected,

the comment on the New Testament by Whitby.

The commentary on the whole Bible, published under the name of Matthew Henry, possesses again qualities peculiar to itself. In no other work of the same kind will the reader find such richness of spiritual improvement, such a diversity of views, the result of so much close and devotional reflection on the word of God. At the same time, this work, which is a perfect storehouse of materials for the preacher, would offer a very questionable satisfaction to the man who sought for the solution of some knotty point, or the elucidation of some obscure passage. He would probably find the difficulty lost sight of in some touching generality ; and would feel that his author was more anxious to apply what was evident, than to clear up what was doubtful.*

* That M. Henry was a non-conformist, could not be discerned by any reader of his commentary.

The great work of Mr. Scott would seem to approach nearer to expectation, if we did not find it labouring in some degree under objections peculiar to itself. As a general summary of scriptural truth, it is unrivalled ; as the production of a whole life devoted to the study of the Bible, it deserves the attention of every one who seeks for the mind of Scripture ; and the integrity of the author offers an assurance that whatever his statements may be, they are only such as he considered to be fair and legitimate deductions from the word. It must however be remembered that he takes the Calvinistic view of the seventeenth article, as far as the doctrine of personal election is concerned ; though he is too honest a man, and too faithful an interpreter of Scripture, to introduce these points, except as he thinks that Scripture leads him, or to allow them to have any practical influence on his instructions. His bias, though perceptible, is never offensive, even to

those who differ from him ; and he seems to have felt more strongly than preceding commentators, the difficulty of reducing Scripture to any thing like system. The student who consults this work, may have occasion perhaps, to regret still more the want of that close and pointed explanation, which alone relieves doubt satisfactorily ; and may find different views so blended together in the commentary, as to be sometimes left in doubt as to the real meaning of the passage he examines.

But if in this way it may occasionally disappoint the inquiry of one who seeks for accurate information, it will seldom be consulted without advantage. To those who know how to appreciate the peculiarities of the author, it will continue to supply a source of pure scriptural interpretation. Generations yet unborn shall drink from its streams and be refreshed ; and a new era of the church may be dated from the period of its publication.

The Family Bible, published by the

Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, exhibited the realization of a plan which had often been contemplated before. By selecting from commentators, or writers of approved reputation, the notes which seemed necessary for the illustration of the text, the Editors hoped to avoid the jealousy which might have been excited by any novel or original explanation; while at the same time it seemed probable, that from the wide field of theological literature, they might be able to collect passages which should meet every question that arose in the study of the Scriptures. Proceeding on this plan, they have collected many important remarks and many valuable illustrations; while it is also obvious, that many difficulties remain unanswered, and that justice can hardly be done to any passage which is quoted in separation from the context. Another objection, and one of greater importance, must also be made to this plan; that it precludes all attempt at

a continuous or connected explanation of the text of Scripture; and that it is better calculated for solving particular difficulties, than for yielding general improvement.

These four form the commentaries in most general use; and it is perhaps obvious, from what has been said, even in this cursory review, that each should be consulted for specific purposes; and that none of them is fully sufficient for all. The meaning of an obscure passage may be more distinctly explained in the Family Bible. The general tone of doctrine may be most satisfactorily traced by Mr. Scott. Practical improvement may be found most amply developed by Matthew Henry; and more of learning may be displayed by Patrick and his associates. He, therefore, who professes to interpret Scripture by the help of such guides, must be aware of the character and power of those on whom he leans; and instead of seeking all he

wants from one, must be content to take from each, that which is most likely to be found in it.

In addition to these commentaries, which include the whole of the Bible, there are others which are confined to the New Testament; and will naturally be referred to for assistance there. Of these, none will be consulted with more general satisfaction, than that by Doddridge, whose tone of mind and spirit seem eminently to have qualified him for the office of commenting on the doctrines of the gospel. Soundness of judgment and spirituality of feeling are combined in this excellent work; and the few, but valuable notes which are subjoined, show what Doddridge was capable of doing in the criticism, as well as in the elucidation of the text.

The work of Macknight may also be referred to with profit. Bold, and acute in his remarks, he has carried to the language of the New Testament some-

thing of that innovating spirit which has more frequently been exercised on the Hebrew of the old. The interpretations which he produces by this system, are not always such as can be admitted; his knowledge of the Greek language was evidently superficial, and his remarks in consequence are frequently rash and ungrounded; nor is his commentary calculated to excite warm or devotional feelings. At the same time his work may be often consulted with advantage. His observations are generally original, and sometimes just; and the different renderings which he offers, serve to break the monotony of our views, and can hardly fail to awaken attention, if they do not bring conviction. The work of Mr. Slade on the Epistles must however be mentioned as a safer and more profitable guide in this species of commentary; and is particularly intended, as well as admirably calculated for the use of students in divinity. Hammond's commentary on the

New Testament is learned and pious, though his views are tinged by the party-feelings which the civil wars excited, and by a phantom of the gnostic heresy which seems to have haunted his imagination. Guyse's commentary on the New Testament, if it is more easily accessible, may be used with profit and satisfaction. For the purpose of family reading, few comments have met with more general acceptance than that by Burkett; and for private devotional study, the translation of Quesnel's Reflections on the New Testament seems peculiarly adapted.

The man who is unsatisfied with these assistances must ascend higher. He must go to the Synopsis of Poole, and amidst the multitude of conflicting opinions which he meets with there, he must endeavour to collect that which approximates the nearest to reason. In this maze of doubts, however, a more enlarged degree of information will be wanted to direct him. He must not only know the names of the authors

which are cited, but he must also know the churches to which they belong, their creeds, their denominations, their private opinions. Beyond this, he must also be guarded against the shock which may be felt at seeing the variety of opinions held and maintained with regard to a single text. Some short acquaintance with this wonderful work, will perhaps lead him to remark, that for acuteness of mind, for that which we commonly call good sense, none of the commentators cited is fit to be compared to Calvin ; and should this lead him to consult the commentary of Calvin, he will be surprised to find, that in closeness of practical application, in freedom from all the abuses of what has been called his system, few commentaries can be put in competition with his.

As a sequel to Poole's Synopsis, as adding to the treasure of old things that of later inquiries, the *Recensio Synoptica* of the Rev. J. S. Bloomfield must likewise be named. But like the pre-

ceding great work, of which it carries on the plan, it will only be made use of for the purpose of occasional reference, to clear up some particular difficulty, or to learn the opinions which have been formed by others. Here indeed it possesses this advantage, that the learned editor acts the part of the moderator among the authors whom he cites, and instead of leaving the student to wander among their conflicting statements, he accompanies these with such remarks, as tend to direct the judgment which should be formed from their conclusions.

One other source of knowledge may be named in addition to these, and that is, the assistance to be derived from different versions. Every language has its peculiarities, and every version has its merits or defects; but it frequently happens that a passage which is rendered obscurely by one, is rendered more clearly by another translator; and that a difficulty which arises from the idiom of one

language, has no place in the idiom of another. The student therefore who possesses the power of turning to any foreign version of the Scriptures, such as the German, the French, the Italian, or the Latin, has the means of collecting the views which other translators have taken of the text; he may in a manner be consulting Luther, Martin, Diodati, or Beza; and may assist his own views of the original, by that which he sees these eminent men have taken.

Such then are the means before us for the interpretation of the sacred text; and to these means, every one who aims at the character of one rightly dividing the word of truth, will necessarily apply with diligence and perseverance. But still let him bear in mind that these are only means—means which by God's blessing may be, and often are, rendered abundantly fruitful; but which still depend upon that blessing for their result. Let

these inquiries therefore be begun, continued, and ended in prayer; let the student remember that the wisdom and the piety of those whom he follows, offer him no security from error, no assurance of arriving at truth, if they are consulted with a careless or a supercilious spirit. Let him bear in mind that sensibility to the power of truth is distinct from the faculty which perceives it; and that whatever may be the means of acquiring theological knowledge, the only way of being made wise unto salvation, is through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

It remains that something should be said of that other method of interpreting Scripture, to which allusion has been made already, and which consists in applying to Scripture those rules, which are used in reference to other books; and in seeking for its meaning by a more attentive study and comparison of its language.

Much that is to be done in this line,

has of course been anticipated by the commentators whose works have been considered; and the use to be made of this method must depend on the circumstances in which the student is placed. Caution at all events must be strongly recommended. All rash and unusual conclusions must be deprecated, and it must never be forgotten that in a book, on which the industry and talents of mankind have been employed for so many centuries, it would be unreasonable to imagine that discoveries should be made by any occasional exertions. The works which might be named to the English reader, as offering assistance and direction in studies of this nature, unfortunately are few in number. Stuart's *Elements of Interpretation*, a translation of part of Ernesti's "*Institutio interpretis Novi Testamenti*," may be safely recommended as exhibiting briefly the chief rules to be followed. The essays which accompany Macknight's translation

of the Epistles, will also offer some useful hints. Bishop Van Mildert's Bampton Lectures treat generally on the Interpretation of Scripture; and in the Introduction to the Scriptures by the Rev. T. H. Horne, (vol. ii. pt. 2,) fuller information may be found, and references to other sources of knowledge, should the student be anxious to carry his inquiries farther.

But whether any attempt is made at this method of interpreting Scripture by itself, or no; there are some books to be named which would be essential to its success, from the information they afford respecting the several parts of Scripture; and which are hardly less necessary to one who merely aims at a general knowledge of the Bible. Among these may be named Gray's Key to the Old Testament, and Bishop Percy's Key to the New, as books which give, in comparatively small space, an abundance of useful knowledge. Besides these general introductions, Graves on the Pentateuch must be

named as a book of first-rate importance to the study of the Old Testament ; with which, Faber's *Horæ Mosaicæ*, and Owen on the Scripture miracles, may he read with advantage.

Fleury on the Manners of the Israelites, translated by Dr. A. Clarke, is a pleasing and useful illustration of the early books of the Bible ; and Prideaux's *Connection of the Old and New Testament* supplies almost all the information that can be wanted with regard to the later history of the Jewish people. From sources like these a general knowledge of the component parts of Scripture should be gained before any inferences are attempted from the comparison of their language ; and the character of the Bible should be thoroughly understood, before it is made its own interpreter.

Bishop Lowth's *Lectures on Hebrew Poetry* must not be omitted in a notice of works essential to the interpretation of Scripture. No person seems to have

caught the peculiar character of the sacred writers with so much accuracy of taste as he did; and though his notes upon Isaiah are marked by a boldness of conjecture, which can neither be justified or defended, he has probably done more than any English writer to the illustration of the Old Testament, by his remarks on the stile and spirit of its writers. All the other information which the young student may require, he will find collected in Mr. Horne's Introduction to the Scriptures; a work, the result of very extensive and laborious reading; and which, while it offers in a very clear and lucid arrangement the elementary knowledge that is wanted, enables the reader to prosecute his inquiries further, and to judge for himself, by the copious references it gives to the original sources of information. It is hardly requisite now to recommend a book, which has gained such extensive circulation; but it is important to convey to every student the intelligence of the

resource which it is in his power to obtain. That knowledge of Jewish antiquities which used to be sought in Reland, Jennings, and other similar works, is now condensed in a few pages of this valuable summary. The results of Lardner's laborious investigations, of the researches of Michaelis, and other eminent divines, are comprised in the introductory descriptions of the different books in the Bible; and information which could hardly be found in any work whatever, is presented in the bibliographical notices which are introductory to the study of Scripture criticism.

CHAPTER VI.

*The Study of the Evidences of Religion.
Its necessity and extent.*

HITHERTO we have been engaged in considering the studies and the means of knowledge, which seem necessary to the minister himself, or which supply the materials of his usefulness among those, whose hearts God has opened, and whom his grace has prepared to receive with meekness the engrafted word. Another description of knowledge succeeds, which must be devoted to a different object, and addressed to a different class of hearers : a description of knowledge which may be called

his defensive armour; the knowledge which he will need against those who are opposed to the truth, who doubt or who deny the authority of the word which he is commissioned to preach. In order to be fully prepared for his office, he must not only be acquainted with the truths which it is his privilege to inculcate; he must not only be instructed in the whole tenor of that message of reconciliation which he is ordained to convey, and be capable of declaring its purport in every variety of form and application; but he must also be prepared to prove, that the credentials of his office are authentic; to show, that the message he delivers really comes from God; and that every word of invitation or of threatening which he utters, is founded on the authority of eternal truth, and stamped with the name of God. In a word; he must be master of the evidences of religion, as well as acquainted with the Bible.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to add,

that it is probable there never was a period in the church, when this species of knowledge was more imperiously, or more generally called for in its ministers. Infidelity has always existed. Each succeeding generation has witnessed some rising of the carnal mind, some attempt to impeach the truth of God's word, and some effort made to shake off a yoke which was intolerable, by undermining the foundations of religious belief. But hitherto these attempts have been chiefly confined to those who had leisure for speculation, and learning to justify their inquiries. The infidels, the sceptics of former ages were comparatively few in number; and were only met in those walks of life where the parochial minister was unknown. But the case is obviously altered now. The diffusion of knowledge has brought with it the evils as well as the benefits which belong to intellectual advancement; and just as in a flood, the first burst of the water carries on its sur-

face the accumulated rubbish and filth, from which the following stream is free ; so the first burst of the flood of knowledge, has brought with it a mass of irreligion and infidelity from which succeeding ages, we trust, may be exempted. As it is, the effects are too general, too obvious to be doubted. Infidelity is found in the cottage as well as in the palace. It has filled, it has deluged the land with its poison ; and there is no situation so retired, no sphere of duty so humble, where a minister may not be compelled to hear, where he may not be required to answer objections, which formerly used only to be heard in the haunts of literary speculation, or in the open opposition of the world. For these then he must be prepared—and for these he must be prepared, in proportion to the importance of the contest they involve. In fact, he is called to prove, to make good, the very credentials of his office, the very foundations of the faith

which he preaches. He is called to show why, and by what authority, he speaks what he does speak. He is called to show, why he requires attention and obedience to his words ; and if he fails in this, if he does not succeed in showing the necessity there is to believe the word, and to admit what he utters, as deductions from it ; his whole office is neutralized by this want of authority ; and his reasoning will be used in vain, when addressed to minds blinded by passion, or by appetite.

We must not imagine, therefore, that a knowledge of the evidences of religion is any superfluous part of a parochial minister's education. On the contrary, he will probably be soon led to remark, if his mind is drawn out in the inquiry ; how little difference is produced by situation or circumstances, in the objections he will have to hear, and the arguments he will have to combat. He will be surprised to find how limited is the scope of the human mind in this respect ; how

near the peasant stands to the philosopher, when they both stand opposed to God ; and how little the acuteness of a cultivated mind rises above that of the uneducated, when they are each sunk alike in scepticism and cavil. Learning no doubt may serve to dress up the objection which is urged, with a little more of plausibility in one case, than it possesses in the other ; but the strength of the opposition lies in that perversion of will and alienation from God, which is common to both ; and the real root of doubt is that evil heart of unbelief, which belongs alike to the learned and the unlearned. The circumstances which cause, or which strengthen doubt, may be collected and accumulated by research, in the case of the man of education. He may be able to arrange his objections more scientifically, and may claim a higher species of evidence with some greater appearance of consistency ; but the doubt begins, and the strength of doubt exists

in the unwillingness to admit a truth which is unwelcome; and it often happens that the natural subtlety of the untutored mind is as hard to meet, and as hard to overcome, as the practised acuteness of the literary sceptic.

Of this we may be sure, that divine truth finds a welcome reception in no heart which is not prepared to receive it by the Spirit; and the same disposition to cavil, the same tendency to doubt, the same desire to elude or to escape conviction, exists in all, who are not drawn of God to believe the gospel. Till this becomes the case, opposition to divine truth, either openly avowed or secretly felt, is the character of every man that lives, and influences the exercise of all the faculties he possesses. In that state of mind, the increase of acuteness which education produces will be employed, not for the purpose of removing, but of discovering difficulties. Increase of knowledge will be used, not to disperse, but to collect ob-

jections. The very means of religious improvement may be turned against the cause they are intended to promote; and the Bible may be read with perverse diligence, in order to find reasons why the Bible should not be believed.

No man, therefore, can be considered as qualified for the office of the ministry, who is not prepared to meet the opposition of the evil heart of unbelief in all its forms and circumstances. Wherever his lot may be cast, however humble or remote may be his sphere of action, he must not expect to escape the general necessity of contending for the truth once delivered to the saints. He will soon have occasion to find, in the simplest minds, the root of that infidelity which sheds its bitter fruits over the whole surface of the world; and as soon as he prevails on his people to think and exercise their reason on religious subjects, he will be surprised to see how naturally errors and doubts spring up, like weeds which have long

lain dormant in the bosom of the earth, but begin to vegetate as soon as it is turned. But he will also find that a busy agent is now at work, sowing tares among the wheat. He will meet with the cavils and doubts of the learned brought down to the comprehension of the ignorant, and circulated with malignant activity wherever they can find admittance. He must be prepared to hear on the road, or in the market-place, the objections and doubts which used only to be whispered in private; and will often find man only quick to do evil, and showing no signs of reasoning powers except when he is arguing against the truth. He must be prepared, therefore, to combat all the current arguments of unbelief, and in every diversity of form; in the form of objection and of doubt, as well as that of open denial; in serious discussion or in sneers and ridicule. He must likewise be prepared to meet them at every turn and on any occasion, as brought forward

in conversation incidentally, as well as in regular argument ; and instead of waiting to consult books, instead of deferring the question for consideration ; he must be ready, in season and out of season, to stand the assault of the enemy, and to give to every one that asketh him, not merely a reason of the hope that is in him, but a proof of the unreasonableness of the unbelief which asks it.

This habitual preparation implies not merely study, or that acquaintance with the subject which is gained by books ; but likewise that readiness of reply and that facility in argument, which are only formed by exercise. It implies familiarity with the topics which are usually brought forward, and knowledge of the fallacies on which their arguments are built. It implies a general acquaintance likewise with those devices of the infidel and sceptic by which they lie in wait to deceive ; and quickness and decision in detecting them. Nor let the Christian

minister shrink from the painful and distressing office of examining those systems of error which are at present afloat in the world. Painful as the employment may be, and foreign from the tone of mind which he wishes to encourage, he must study the diseases he will have to cure, even in the regions of infection. The value of souls requires the exertion, and the importance of the end justifies the self-exposure. For the sake of knowing how to answer the objections of the unbeliever, he must learn what those objections are; he must ascertain their grounds and their extent; and must be prepared to show, in some simple and conclusive way, their fallacy and unsoundness. Less than this cannot be required, for less than this would be insufficient; and the individual minister himself must feel, that nothing less than this was promised, when he declared, in reply to the question in his ordination service, that he would be "ready with all faithful dili-

gence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word."

But it is also desirable that this preparation should be commenced by a deep and attentive consideration of the first principles of religion. It is desirable that the foundation of belief should be as firmly established as its superstructure ; and that nothing should be left unguarded, where it is possible for an attack to be made. But it is also important, that, antecedently to any discussion of the objections which may be made against the system of revealed religion, the mind should be strongly impressed with the necessity of those great truths on which the whole is grounded. Unless this be the case, it is not probable that the inquiry will be carried on with that ardour which is essential to success ; and the mind, instead of seeking for conviction, or endeavouring to produce conviction in others, will remain satisfied with a state of indecision

which is inconsistent with any idea of truth. Even in cases of professed belief, a languor and an indifference on the subject is sometimes seen, which is hardly to be reconciled with sincerity, and which renders the truth that is admitted inoperative; and it is therefore desirable not only that men should believe, but that they should know the whole grounds on which they are called to believe, and feel the magnitude of the truths which they profess.

As an introduction then to the study of the evidences of religion, it is desirable that a man should be acquainted with the metaphysical arguments by which its essential truths are proved. He should feel, that distinct from those arguments by which revelation may be vindicated against objections or cavil, there is a chain of reasoning which addresses itself to the intellect, and deduces both the being and attributes of God from the very nature of things. If this branch of study

was begun with Clarke's celebrated Essay on this subject, it might then proceed to consider the necessity of such a revelation as that of the gospel, from the state of mankind at large, in the way in which it is discussed by Leland,* or in the Treatise of Dr. Ellis.†

When this has been done, and the foundation of faith has been thus firmly laid, the student may go on, with greater security, to consider the evidence which may be derived to its support from facts. He will thus feel that he has not a religion to seek, but a religion to prove; and that the evidence he collects hereafter is merely for the purpose of adding confirmation to what he already believes.

In this part of his inquiry, the first step should be to ascertain the nature of the proof which he is to aim at,

* Advantage and necessity of the Christian Revelation shown from the state of religion in the Heathen world. 2 vols. 8vo.

† Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation.

and to distinguish the different species of moral evidence and demonstration. Much of the doubt that has prevailed in the world has arisen from no other source than ignorance of this most important distinction. Many elaborate systems, which have only involved the cause of truth in uncertainty, might have been spared, had this been kept in view. Men would not have been professing to demonstrate moral truths, if they had remembered that the attempt, in strictness of speech, was as vain, as it would be to ascertain the merit of works of literature by calculation ; and they would have done more towards removing error if they had begun by professing less, and had not promised demonstration on a subject which, from its nature, was incapable of receiving that sort of proof.

On this particular point several books touch incidentally, and few will be more useful than the essay prefixed to the new edition of Butler's Analogy, by the

Rev. D. Wilson. Gambier, on Moral Evidence, treats of it more specifically ; and a little volume recently published under the name of *The Nature of the Proof of the Christian Religion*, states the importance of the question briefly and distinctly.

When the nature of that evidence which religion is really capable of, has been ascertained, the study will be pursued with greater ease and security. More evidence will not be required than the case demands, and the mind will be prepared to acquiesce in that species of evidence which is all that the case admits. Demonstration will not be looked for where moral truth alone is to be proved ; and even the reason will find, that there is a degree of probability on which it can repose with confidence.

It is desirable that this distinction should be continually kept in view, not merely for the purpose of regulating the studies preparatory to the ministry, but

likewise for the purpose of ascertaining the sort of conviction which may be subsequently hoped for. A man can hardly be expected to conduct a course of argument with the patience which is desirable, if he imagines that the truths, of which he is firmly assured, must produce immediate conviction in the minds of those with whom he reasons. He will have to unlearn these sanguine feelings by a long and painful experience, if he is not originally aware of the real nature of the evidence he produces; and he may be in danger of judging too severely of the character of those with whom he argues, if he thinks that the truth he urges with sincerity, must be admitted as self-evident.

But with this preparation, he will not be led to doubt the soundness of his own conclusions, because they do not convince others; and will feel that the evidence of divine truth is sufficient for all

moral purposes, even if it does not rise to the level of rigid demonstration.

Among the works which may be named on this subject, the great difficulty consists in choosing one, where so many present themselves to the choice. Among the many that may be named, the great work of Grotius, *De Veritate Religionis Christianæ*, must not be deprived of the place which it justly deserves. Standing as it does among the very earliest of modern works on the truth of Christianity, it has not left much to be done by its followers in the way of direct evidence; but either in the text or in the notes, it has supplied a body of proof which meets almost every case that can be imagined. Whether the character of the eminent man, who, in the midst of political turbulence and literary renown, found time to compose this work, or the purpose for which the work itself was written, be taken into consideration; it

deserves a more attentive and deliberate study than is usually bestowed upon it now. Of more modern works, and of those which treat generally on the subject of the evidences, it may be sufficient to name the work of Dr. Chalmers,* or the Essays of Mr. J. J. Gurney,† as containing, in a very moderate size, a collective view of the arguments in favour of revelation. To these may now be added the recently published work of the Rev. D. Wilson on the Evidences.‡ Either of these works, and most especially the last, will supply the student with that general knowledge of the subject which it is essential to gain; and from which he may proceed to consider the several provinces of proof more fully and more particularly, according to the opportunities he may have.

* Evidences and Authority of the Christian Religion.

† Essays on the Evidences of Christianity.

‡ The Evidences of Christianity stated in a popular and practical manner. 2 vols. 8vo.

In descending from works which treat of the evidences generally, to those which consider them more in particular, we should name first the well-known Treatise of Leslie, entitled a Short and Easy Method with the Deists, as a work against which an answer has not been attempted, and which deserves the closest and most attentive meditation. The reasoning in this treatise approaches as near to demonstration as it is easy to imagine; nor can a better foundation be laid for systematic belief than the train of evidence which is developed here, and the method in which the proof is conducted. It has been published separately, as well as in several collections, and may therefore be easily obtained. In a compressed form, it is included, with some other standard works, in the little volume called the Pleiad, which has been published by Archdeacon Wrangham in Constable's Miscellanies. Among these will be found Doddridge's Three valuable Discourses,

a work which should not be omitted in a list of books upon the evidences.

Bishop Douglas's *Criterion of Miracles* is an important illustration of the nature of that evidence which they supply ; and as it has been abridged and published by the Rev. W. March, it may be easily procured by all, and at a very trifling cost.

But with regard to the external evidence of Christianity, the well-known work of Paley has almost superseded every other. The peculiar qualities of Paley's mind, its simplicity and acuteness, fitted him beyond most men for the object which he here undertook. In his hands the subject lost its dryness and abstraction, and was for the first time presented to the reader in a form which awakened curiosity and disarmed prejudice. That happy talent which Paley possessed of attaching himself to the important points of a question, and of rejecting those which were immaterial, enabled him at once to cut off a

variety of considerations which used to embarrass the enquiry, and to offer it to the general reader with an appearance of candour, which at least conciliated his respect. He also saw, by a kind of intuition, the line of argument which would be most conclusive; he well knew how to follow this with the strictest logic, and to present its results in the simplest and most perspicuous form. In these respects the truth of the gospel history was a subject which he was peculiarly qualified to discuss. He delighted in tracing the truth which he there saw clearly marked before him; and the honesty of his own mind made him rejoice in rejecting the idle and sophistical cavils by which it had been obscured and contested by others.

The soundness and simplicity of his reasoning, together with the candour which he exhibits on every occasion, render this work one of the most generally useful books that ever has been published; and it is probable that no man

ever sat down to the study of Paley in a proper frame of mind, who did not rise from the perusal convinced at least of the historical truths of the gospel.

This great work has not only eclipsed those which preceded it, but it has left little to be done in the same line by those who came after him.

In addition to those which have been already named as general summaries of the evidence, the work of the Bishop of Chester on the Records of the Creation is still to be specially noted, on account of the originality of view by which it is characterized, and for the explanation which it offers of some difficulties connected with modern philosophy, or which have risen out of the present state of society. With regard to the evidence deduced from prophecy, the work of Bishop Newton is the most satisfactory manual; and the little compendium published by Mr. Keith under the name of Evidence of the Christian Religion derived from the literal fulfil-

ment of Prophecy, gives in a very clear and easy form, a summary of this branch of proof.

Beyond these general or particular statements of the evidences of divine truth, replies to the cavils and objections of unbelievers must be chiefly sought in the publications which have appeared in answer to them. Bishop Watson's replies to Gibbon and Paine, Milner's answer to Gibbon, and Scott's answer to the *Age of Reason*, will enable any candid mind to see the fallacy and irrelevancy of the arguments which are most frequently urged. The revival of these refuted sophisms, and of the ribaldry of Paine by Taylor, has led to Dr. Pye Smith's very satisfactory reply,* and to the able work entitled *Remarks on the Diegesis*.† To the above might be

* Answer to the works of Robert Taylor. 8vo. price 1s. 6d.

† *Remarks on the work of the Rev. R. Taylor, styled the Diegesis.* Cadell. 1830.

added, as treating more generally of the same subject, Faber's *Difficulties of Infidelity; Deism Refuted, or Plain Reasons for being a Christian*, by the Rev. T. H. Horne; and Cecil's *Reasons for Repose*.

But beyond the general objections of the sceptic and the infidel, the minister must likewise be prepared to meet a more subtle and refined assault from writers of the Socinian school: an assault which it is more difficult to meet, as it is cloked under the profession of belief, and is begun by asking concessions, which seem too inconsiderable to be denied. The study of this controversy, which exhibits more perhaps than any other of the sophistry of the heart of man, would soon carry us beyond the limits which this essay imposes. It must suffice us now to refer the student to the great work of Archbishop Magee on the *Atonement*, where he will see the varied powers of a great and accomplished mind,

tracking the spirit of deceit through all its hiding places, and using all the weapons of learning, reasoning, and wit, for its discomfiture. The Scripture Testimony to the Messiah, by Dr. J. P. Smith, in its enlarged and revised form, may be referred to also as an admirable digest of the controverted texts; or Wardlaw on the Socinian Controversy may be read: and he who wishes to see a complete analysis of the spirit and tendency of Socinianism, should turn to Fuller's Calvinism and Socinianism compared.

But there is one other work to be mentioned under this head, without which no system of moral evidence will be certain of producing satisfactory convictions; and that is Bishop Butler's celebrated Analogy of Religion. If there is one book in the English language which more than another deserves, and more than another requires, deep reflection and frequent perusal, it is this. To a careless or a hasty reader, it may offer little attraction and

may promise little information. Its language will appear involved, its reasoning inconclusive, its tone spiritless and flat; but the man who overcomes the first feelings of distaste, who grows familiar with its phraseology, and gives himself time to extract its meaning, will feel that the views which he has gained, the frame of mind which he has derived from its study, will do more towards establishing his faith, than any other course of reading which he could have adopted.

In point of fact, indeed, difficulties will exist under every system of evidence which Revelation can adduce; for which an explanation resembling this given by Butler is required, in order that they may be removed. It is not in the nature of things that every difficulty should be done away by a method of proof which only accumulates probabilities. After all that has been said on behalf of the truth of the gospel, men may doubt as to its credibility; and it is only by showing

them that it is unreasonable to doubt, that it is unnatural not to be decided by such a preponderance of proof as may be adduced on behalf of Christianity; that the essential deficiency of this species of evidence is supplied, and that its deductions are rendered conclusive.

This link in the chain of evidence is most admirably supplied by Butler; while arguing from the state of things which exists at present, and the evidence by which men are usually decided in other questions, he shows that there is no difficulty involved in revealed religion, which supplies just ground for its rejection; but, that on the contrary, the difficulties are such as it was reasonable to expect, and such as offer no hindrance to belief in other cases. This work of Butler's should be read in the edition which has been recently published by the Rev. D. Wilson; who has added to the many services he has rendered to the church of Christ, by the strong and discriminating lan-

guage in which he has recommended its study to the younger clergy ; and by the excellent analysis of the work itself which he has prefixed.

Of that peculiar branch of evidence which is called the internal evidence, nothing has been yet said ; and yet it is of the two species of evidence the most effective, the most peculiar. The subject is casually treated by Paley ; more specifically by the Bishop of Chester and the Rev. D. Wilson in the works already mentioned. It was made many years ago the subject of an essay by Soame Jenyns, which, though limited in its plan, still deserves attention, and which was one of the first attempts to attract attention to this mode of proof. Some beautiful and striking remarks on the questions are to be met with in Mr. Erskine's essay. But of all the different branches under which the evidence of religion may be considered, this is the one in which most remains to be done, and in which the

most interesting discoveries are yet to be made.

Under the name of internal evidence it has been usual to include two species of evidence, which, in their nature, are almost as specific and distinct as those which are usually spoken of as internal and external.

There is an internal evidence of the genuineness of the sacred books, derived from the marks of undesigned correspondence, from coincidence of statement and harmony of doctrine; and there is an evidence of their divine original arising from the more than human wisdom and purity of the doctrines they inculcate, and, above all, from their exact correspondence with the wants and feelings of which man is conscious.

Of the first of these kinds of evidence, Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ* presents an admirable specimen; a specimen which has been ably followed by Mr. Blunt in his two works, the *Veracity of the Books*

of Moses, and the Veracity of the Gospels and Acts, argued. This species of evidence, however, is comparatively narrow in its sphere of operation. It is perhaps better calculated to confirm the faith of those who are disposed to believe, than to produce conviction; and at all events it must not be put in competition with that which arises from the harmony between the word of God and the wants of man; and which makes man feel the real character of the gospel by the power with which it speaks to his heart and his conscience. This evidence, of which every one carries about within him the arguments and the proofs, is not only the most convincing, but it is also the most useful, because it is the most universally applicable. Men who have not leisure or knowledge sufficient for appreciating the power of external evidence, may be capable of feeling the influence of this in the largest measure; and if the faith of our common people is to rest on

any other basis than that of respect for authority, it must be raised on this. It is to be regretted that a view of divine truth, which admits of so many important applications, should hitherto have been so much overlooked, that it is not easy to point out any work which treats of it specifically. The Sermons of Dr. Watts on the Inward Witness approach nearest to this character, and they may be found in an abridged form in Archdeacon Wrangham's *Pleiad*. The general subject is also admirably discussed in Mr. Wilson's *Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity*, and in his *Introductory Essay* prefixed to his Edition of Butler's *Analogy*.

In connexion with the subject of evidence, some notice must also be taken of the argument by which the inspiration of Scripture has been ascertained and proved; since it is obvious that the authenticity of Scripture cannot be maintained, unless satisfactory proof can be adduced

that the Scripture is indeed the word of God.

Doddridge's Lectures give a view of the different opinions which have been held on this point, and of the different degrees of inspiration which have been asserted. Dr. Dick's work on the Inspiration of the Old and New Testament may be read with advantage. A good summary of the question may be found in the Preface to Scott's Bible, and some important materials are collected in the Appendix to the first volume of Mr. Horne's Introduction. The recent work of Mr. Haldane on the subject likewise deserves attention, though it asserts more than is necessary, or even safe to do, with regard to the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures.

From the sources above mentioned, it is hoped that such a knowledge may be gained of the evidence on which the Christian religion rests, as may not only give the student a well-grounded convic-

tion of its truth, but may also enable him to answer the doubts, and to silence the cavils which he meets in the course of his ministry.

But let him beware while engaged in this study, useful and necessary as it is, of the growth of a cold argumentative frame of mind. The truths of religion are so sacred, that the very necessity of adducing proofs in their behalf is a kind of outrage done to their character; and the pious mind feels that it is one of the evils of the present state of circumstances, to be required to use arguments in a case which ought, in all propriety, to be only a matter of feeling.

If, however, things are so; if we must really take pains to prove to the intellect what the heart ought long ago to have anticipated; and men must be convinced, by reasoning, of the reality of a blessedness which they do not feel; let the man who engages in this pursuit be on his guard against its chilling, deteriorating

influence. It is not without something of violence done to his own feelings, that the man who has been brought up in habits of undoubting, unquestioning belief, sits down to the study of the evidences of religion. At first, his impression will be wonder at the laborious process which is required to produce belief; and he will be surprised at the long and circuitous course by which men endeavour to arrive at the conviction of a truth, which, to him, appears self-evident. But, gradually, his intellect will become interested in the study; a spirit of inquiry may be excited, which, increasing in activity and boldness, may go on till it rises into scepticism. Truths, of which he never suspected the integrity, may be questioned first and then doubted. The firmness of his original impressions may be shaken, by observing the difference of conclusions drawn by other men. He may begin to distrust the correctness of his views, when he sees the industry and erudition displayed

in those who vary from him in their inferences. The study will gradually assume a more secular and literary character. Even the truths of revelation may be carried to a human judicature; and, imperceptibly, he may find himself sitting in judgment on the word and purposes of his Maker, and discussing the claim of Scripture to reception; as if all the glory of the Divinity were departed from it. It is impossible to avoid feeling that these effects have been already frequently produced; and that even the study of the evidences has been carried on in such a manner, as to produce a clear, cold conviction of the truth of Christianity, with little or no sense of its peculiar privileges or comforts.

The student, then, must be on his guard against a danger like this. He must endeavour to preserve in his mind a feeling of reverence and veneration for the truths which he discusses. At every successive display of light, he must pause

and worship. He must endeavour to keep united in his feelings, joy in the truth which he is examining, with knowledge of the foundation on which it rests; and he must check every tendency to the temper of mere intellectual inquiry, by beginning, continuing, and ending all his studies with prayer for guidance and illumination.

CHAPTER VII.

The doctrines of the Church to be collected from the Creeds and Articles. Works to be consulted for the explanation of these, and for the application of particular truths.

It has been the object of this sketch to suggest a course of theological reading adapted to the case of those students who are preparing for the parochial ministry. It has been assumed that for this purpose a course of study, of which the Bible itself should form the substance, and which should merely be extended to other books, in order to illustrate and explain the Bible, was best suited to the

opportunities they possessed, as well as to the nature of their duties.

It was hoped that in this way views of divine truth might be formed, more enlarged, more general, more agreeable to the greatness of the Being whose operations are contemplated, and to the infirmity of those who are engaged in the study, than any which have taken the shape of a regular system: and though it was obvious that a limited plan of study like this, must omit many things which it was very desirable to know; it seemed capable of including more of that which was absolutely essential to ministerial usefulness, than any other which it was easy to point out. But in discarding system, or in ceasing to make that the chief object of pursuit, it is not meant that there is any want of certainty in religious truth, or that it is desirable, or even possible, for the mind to be in a state of indecision on points of vital importance. The word of God is not in-

consistent with itself, though we may not always be able to perceive its agreement. In the midst of the most painful inquiries, we must feel assured that the difficulties which obstruct our progress are apparent, not real ; that they belong not to the subject, but to the nature of the beings who are engaged in contemplating it. And though consciousness of human infirmity, and of the limits of human knowledge, should induce every one who thinks upon the subject, to think with humility, and to speak with caution ; it is not less true, that certainty may be gained, and that certainty must be had on points of chief importance, in order to have peace.

This degree of certainty, this species of conclusion, the church herself requires from all who undertake the office of ministers. The assent which is given at the time of ordination to the Articles of religion, assumes them as the standard of belief for every individual who sub-

scribes them. What they assert, he asserts. What they deny, he denies. As far as they go, he is supposed to go ; and where they stop, he does not go further. The latitude of the language in which they are drawn up, their specific disavowal of every doctrine which may not be proved from holy Scripture, show that they impose no yoke on the conscience, nor infringe the liberty of the mind. Still, nothing less can be implied from the act of subscription, than that as far as the Articles conclude, so far must the minister of the Church of England have concluded likewise ; that he must have obtained that degree of conviction which their language naturally expresses, and which enables him on this occasion to use it as his own.

It is presumed, therefore, that a diligent and faithful study of the Bible, accompanied and assisted by much of prayer for divine guidance, will lead to such inferences on points of doctrine,

as we find embodied in the thirty-nine Articles. This result might seem to be anticipated with undue confidence, this conclusion to have been presumed too hastily and too universally, if the language of our Articles had been less general and less liberal than it is. A complaint might have been raised with justice, that the Church of England expected that the same deductions would be drawn from the Bible by all her ministers, if the wording of this confession did not meet the varieties of human views by the moderation of its own positions; and harmonize in this respect, as well as in others, with the book from which it is drawn.

No better proof, indeed, can be given of the singular felicity with which the Articles of the Church of England are framed, than the obvious fact, that faithful men, both of the Arminian and Calvinistic school, have signed them with equal sincerity; and just as they have agreed

in supposing that their own peculiar doctrines were the doctrines of the Bible, have agreed in admitting that these articles contained a proper and satisfactory exhibition of their views. No doubt, if either party, in later times, when controversy had sharpened the temper, and quickened the acuteness of men, had attempted a modification of their language; it would have become more specific, and might have suited the taste of individuals more exactly. But there is good reason to fear, that just as the language ceased to be general, it would have ceased to be scriptural; and that any alteration would have ended by excluding many, whom it was manifest that God had received.

Such as they are then, the Articles of the Church of England are offered to every one who undertakes the office of its ministry, as a body of conclusions, to which it is supposed he will arrive by the study of the Holy Scripture; nor is there any thing violent or unjust in the suppo-

sition, whatever may be its appearance at first. The general harmony of the Articles with the whole tenour of the Bible ; their precise and definite accordance with it, in all points of obvious necessity ; their caution on those which are mysterious ; their reserve on those which are not essential ; their general acknowledgment of the sovereign authority of the word of Scripture, render them a summary of religious truths, which the experience of thousands and tens of thousands of men, eminently qualified for pronouncing such a judgment, has agreed in considering satisfactory ; and from which, few indeed have revolted, who have not equally revolted from the wider standard of truth in the Bible. In things fundamental, or of essential necessity therefore, the Articles offer that degree of certainty which man is capable of attaining, and at which man is bound to aim. In minor points, less exactness is required and less exactness is attempted ;

but in these, wherein the unity of faith, the reality of religion consists, precision is attempted, for precision is desirable, and doubt would be intolerable.

The result which it would be most agreeable to observe, would be to see the student arriving, through the study of the Bible, at those very conclusions which he finds laid down in the articles; and to observe the satisfaction with which he would discover those inferences which he had drawn for himself from the Scriptures, embodied and expressed in the language of his church.

It is not too much to believe that this has continually been the case; and the very same conviction which satisfies us of the truth of the Bible, and leads to the hope that every honest and diligent inquirer will at last be satisfied of the fact; encourages an equal expectation, that the same inquiries, carried on in the spirit of humility and prayer, will end by conducting to a similar uniformity of senti-

ment with regard to the doctrines contained in it.

The Articles considered in themselves, as the standard principles of the Church of England, include the three Creeds, which have been, from the earliest period of ecclesiastical history, the standards of Christian belief. As such, as well as from the place which they bear in the formularies of our church, they also must be considered as statements of divine truth, received by the man, and professed by the man, who ministers in its offices; and must form part of his introductory studies. Of these, the creed of the apostles presents, in the simplest form and with the least of technical language, the truths which seem essential to the Christian faith. That of Nice exhibits the same, with a little more of the phraseology of religion, and some of those explanations and cautions which the growth of error had rendered necessary. The creed which bears the name of Atha-

nasius, appears in a more scientific garb ; filled with the limitations and denials which the acute and controversial temper of the Greeks had entailed upon the church, and offering to the eye of faith a melancholy picture of the variety of errors which had sprung up since the time of the apostles.

Each of these creeds, therefore, will require some distinct consideration, with regard to the truths which they assert in common, and the different method in which they express them. On the Apostles' Creed, the great work of Bishop Pearson should certainly be read with attention ; and when the student has gone over this, he will be able to appreciate the variations of statement which occur in the following confessions. If he wishes for more particular information, with regard to the Athanasian Creed, he must turn to the work of Waterland ; or he may find the most important topics, well put together, in a little volume by the

Rev. T. H. Horne, called the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity ; and he will also find the character of the creed admirably vindicated in a pamphlet by the late Mr. Richardson of York.

It is desirable that the study of the Creeds should precede the study of the Articles ; and it is to be hoped that the study of the Creeds, taken in the order of their ages, will be the best preparation for the study of the Articles. We may learn, at least, from this comparison of the Creeds, how the progress of error required, at each successive period, some specific provisions on the part of the church. We may see how the simple statement of truth, which was sufficient in the earlier ages, was superseded by a more technical and precise mode of expression in later times. We may see the effect which was caused, by the necessity of asserting truths that were impugned, or of denying errors which were attempted to be introduced : and we may

thus learn, that every confession of faith will bear the marks of the age in which it was composed, will be the echo of the controversies which prevailed at the time, and will be, in some degree, directed against the particular errors of the day.

Neither our Articles, therefore, nor the Creeds which they include, will be properly understood, or justly appreciated, except through the medium of history. They all bear marks of the circumstances under which they were formed; and though it may be sufficient, in general, to refer to Scripture for proof of the doctrines they maintain, we must look to other sources of information in order to know why those doctrines were asserted, or why they were asserted in such a manner. The pointed accuracy of the Creed of Athanasius may appear an idle and impertinent precision to those who view it by itself; and who only compare the phraseology of its statements with the larger and more popular lan-

guage of Scripture. But acquaintance with the opinions which were current in the church at the time when it was drawn up, knowledge of the monstrous heresies which abounded, and which all professed to be deduced from Scripture, will enable us to take a fuller and more favourable view of the nature of the work. We shall then see that the instrument was wisely formed to meet evils which were actually pressing, and actually threatening ; and, instead of condemning the peculiarity of the language, we may learn to respect the vigour and acuteness of the mind which raised up such a barrier against the encroachments of speculative error.

The same rule must be attended to with regard to the Articles of our church. It is necessary that we should know something of the opinions which had been formed, something of the state of the public mind, and of the public feeling, at the period when they were drawn up, in order

to account for the positions that are laid down, and of the extent to which some of these statements are carried. Unless this be the case, surprise may be felt at the variety of points which are introduced as essential; and when the simple conciseness of Scripture is brought into comparison with the laboured exactness of human language, men may be tempted to think, that more is required in our Articles than is justified by divine authority; and that the founders of our church imposed an unnecessary burden on the conscience.

It would be wrong, therefore, to commence the study of the Articles, without some previous knowledge of the state of religious opinions in the church when they were framed; for scriptural as they are, and scriptural as they may be shown to be, we may doubt whether the imposition is scriptural, whether there is no unnecessary burden laid upon the conscience, if no circumstances appear

to render it necessary. With this easy preparation of historical knowledge, a preparation which does not imply more than a general acquaintance with the state of religion in the world at that period, the Articles may be read with advantage and satisfaction by every one who is master of his Bible, and is capable of tracing the coincidence of statement between them. He will thus see, that the Articles merely aim at carrying the sense of Scripture to the several points which the perverseness of men had confused; that they endeavour to be general, wherever they can be general with safety; and that they only go into particulars, in order to meet the errors which have been introduced.

But as the chief object of the student will be, to mark the harmony which exists between the doctrines he professes and the truths which are revealed in the Word of God, he will find that this is most effectually done, by carefully and diligently comparing the two together. Previous

familiarity with Scripture will take off the chief difficulty of this employment ; and it will be a most beneficial exercise to take each Article separately, and to search out the texts of Scripture on which its several positions rest. The work has been already performed by Archdeacon Welchman ; and, with some supplementary materials, in a volume published by Dr. Wilson ;* it is also done in two smaller publications more recently printed at Oxford ;† but it would be advantageous for every student to attempt for himself, and, as a private exercise, what is more completely done in these. He will thus be able to learn, more fully than by any other process, the correspondence that exists between the Articles of his Church and that Word from which they derive their authority, and will not only obtain the

* The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England illustrated. 8vo.

† The Articles of the Church of England with Scripture proofs.

fullest satisfaction for his own faith, but the fittest means for fixing the faith of others.

If this mode of studying the Articles seems insufficient, the student will naturally wish for some work explanatory of the doctrines which they contain. Of these, that of Bishop Burnet will be found most generally satisfactory. His orthodoxy is unquestioned, his learning various, his piety genuine, and his knowledge of mankind and experience of the world more extensive than usually possessed by men so eminent in theological attainments. He takes what is called the Arminian view of the question, but he knew too much of the worth and excellence of many of those from whom he differed on these points of doctrine, to be unduly biassed against them, or the opinions which they held. The pupil, the friend, and the admirer of Leighton, he would not have differed from one whom he knew so well, and respected so highly, except

from the deepest conviction; still less would he have denied, with Leighton's memory before him, that the most profound humility and the most exemplary holiness were compatible with sentiments opposite to his own, as to some of the deep things of God.

These peculiarities in Burnet's case, not less than his learning and his piety, recommend him to our acceptance as an interpreter of the Articles. Other men, of equal ability, equal learning, and it is possible of equal piety, might have been less fitted for a task so delicate as this, if they lacked the personal feeling which, in his case, disarmed the mind of controversial jealousy, and prepared him to view the opinions opposed to his own, in the form and features of a friend. That moderation, too, which prevails in Burnet, is as far removed from laxity or indifference as it is from violence; and, whatever may be the original leaning of the reader's feelings, there will probably be a

tendency in every candid mind to acquiesce generally in his conclusions.

Bishop Beveridge's explanation may be equally recommended, though it only extends to the first thirty Articles. He holds the scales perhaps with a more impartial hand than Burnet, and is scriptural, learned, and holy.

A different opinion must be given of Hey's lectures : though learned and candid, they are desultory and inconclusive ; and, in some places, carry candour to an extreme which deserves a different name. They are better calculated to amuse the mind of a literary student, than to fix the opinions of a young theologian. If read at all by him, they should be taken up at a time when the judgment is formed, and when the mind is desirous of general information, rather than seeking for particular directions. A young man who should enter on the study of the Articles with these as his only guide, would be embarrassed rather than assisted by

the succession of inquiries proposed to his attention, and find that he lost in certainty more than he gained in information.

Beyond the Articles, and the books which we have suggested as explanatory of them, the Homilies of the church of England will naturally form part of the studies of him who looks forward to the ministry; and with these should be read the Catechisms which go under the name of Nowell, and those masterly works which are published with them in the first volume of the *Enchiridion Theologicum*. From these, if from any sources, the real doctrines of the Church of England are to be drawn; and here, before the stream had been fouled by controversy, and while truth seemed flowing in its purity from the rock of the reformation, it may be sought with more success than in the coloured statements which followed afterwards. A distinction must however be always observed between

those works which are recognized by the church as authorities, and those which possess no other claims than their own merits. And though it may be desirable in the course of study, to read some of the works of the earlier reformers, either those included in the Series published by Mr. Richmond, or those in the cheaper selection which is now in the course of publication ; we must remember that whatever may be the intrinsic value of these writings, or the character of their authors, they must not be taken as standards of opinion.

To complete the view which may have been formed by these studies, to add something of harmony and arrangement to the knowledge collected from other quarters, it may be expedient afterwards to take up some work which should give a connected and general idea of the whole body of Christian doctrine. None perhaps can be used for this purpose more conveniently than Robinson's Christian

System. It is a clear, sound statement of gospel truth; and without entering very particularly into the various points which have been most agitated by controversy, it enables the reader to see what has been the scheme deduced from Scripture, and to regulate his view of different doctrines, by observing their relation to and dependance on each other.

If he has leisure to combine with this, Dwight's System of Divinity, he will find there some eloquent and powerful discussions of the attributes of God, accompanied by much useful and original application of the subject to the conscience. As a book of study, its value is materially diminished by the total absence of references to other authorities; but it well deserves reading, not merely as a connected system of divinity, but also as an able exhibition of some of its most important doctrines.

In the last volume, which treats of

Church Government, the prejudices of the author are offensively manifested ; and here, as well as in some few points where the peculiar doctrines of his party are involved, his judgment seems less clear and his reasoning less conclusive, than it does where the essential truths of the gospel are alone discussed.

In addition to these works, which present doctrine in the form of system, or which illustrate the doctrines of our church as embodied in her Articles, it is desirable to mention a few more which the student may find it necessary or desirable to possess. On the liturgy itself it will be sufficient if he can obtain the edition of the Book of Common Prayer which has been published by Bishop Mant with notes, or Shepherd's Commentary. Either of these will include the information he is likely to want, and obviate the necessity of referring to larger works. With regard to Church Government in general, he must be referred

to Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, as the great authority on the subject. Some excellent treatises of a simpler kind, but well adapted for circulation, and giving considerable information on the nature of our services, and the foundation of our establishment, may be found among the publications of the Bristol Church of England Tract Society. For the purpose of distribution, the Village Conversations on the Liturgy, by the Rev. G. Davys, may be warmly recommended; and an excellent paper on the Scriptural Grounds of Episcopal Government is to be found in the Essays and Tracts of the late Mr. Hey of Leeds.

On different heads of doctrine, and on the practical or experimental use of them, the student may read with advantage Scott's Essays, Hooker's Sermons on Justification, Beveridge's Private Thoughts, Witherspoon on Regeneration, and Faber on the Holy Spirit.

Archbishop Leighton's works must not

be omitted in the enumeration of books which tend to form the tone and character of a Christian minister ; and from many of Baxter's practical treatises, from Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion*, Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man*, and similar works, he may learn how truth is to be brought home to the heart in its most solemn application ; and how the doctrines of the Gospel may be most effectively used for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

The Selection from the Works of the British Divines, formed by the Rev. C. Bradley,* and the series more recently published in Edinburgh† include many valuable treatises of this sort, which it may not otherwise be easy to obtain separate ; and the many minor works, which, either as re-publications of detached parts of authors, or as

* Select British Divines, edited by the Rev. C. Bradley.

† Select Christian Authors, by Chalmers and Collins.

original productions, are continually issuing from the press, offer very important resources to those who can exercise discretion in the use of the materials presented to them. Unquestionably exceptions may be made to some treatises in almost every collection, and to some expressions in almost every treatise ; but these exceptions are frequently as much matters of taste as of judgment ; and the reader sometimes revolts from an expression because it is peculiar, as much as if it was untrue. But even where the difference is real, it is not necessary, in order to derive useful instruction from a book, to coincide in all its statements. Much may be learned from many authors without any entire surrender of the judgment to their opinions ; and it is to be hoped that the man who has once settled his mind on the foundation of the Church and her Articles, may be trusted with different views, without any danger to the soundness and consistency of his own

faith. We might even add, that unless he takes this sort of liberty in his studies, and overcomes the offence which he feels at statements or language which differ from his own, his field will be unnecessarily narrowed, and that he never will possess that wide and extensive acquaintance with the subject which is desirable.

It is probable that expressions may occur in some of the treatises above alluded to, as well as in many valuable works of the earlier divines, which savour of the bias of the time and circumstances at which they were written, and which it would not be expedient to adopt. But the good predominates in a large proportion. Truth is frequently stated with great correctness, and with considerable power, even in those works which seem most objectionable on these grounds ; and it is not too much to hope, that a moderate exercise of discretion, may enable the student to select that which is profitable, while he rejects that which is questionable or injurious.

CHAPTER VIII.

History of the Church, external and internal.—The means for prosecuting the study. Histories, memoirs ; caution to be used in the study of biographical notices.

IN speaking of doctrines we have made some allusion to history ; for in truth, the history of the Church of Christ is properly a history of doctrines ; the rise and fall of these being in this case the events which it is the principal business of the historian to trace and to delineate. But the history which is here to be studied, is limited in its extent. Instead of being

occupied in recording those multiplied changes which the will of man has been endeavouring to produce on the surface of the earth ; it is engaged in watching and describing the various agencies by which our Maker has been accomplishing the one great object of his purpose, the redemption, the restoration of mankind. In the earlier period of the world, this history therefore is confined to the state of the Jewish people, the nation which God chose as the depository of his will, as the instrument of its final accomplishment. From the period of the Christian era the channel is widened ; the stream flows on, gaining width and depth as it advances, and comprising within its space the records of nations innumerable ; and thus we feel that it will increase, till the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and one history shall suffice for all the posterity of Adam.

Down to the time of the Christian era, therefore, the records which the Old Tes-

tament itself includes, will form the chief subject of study ; and other histories will only be consulted or read in proportion as they refer to this, or contribute to throw light upon it. At the point where these records of the Old Testament begin to fail us, or the period of the captivity of Judah, the great work of Prideaux, “ The Old and New Testament connected in the History of the Jewish people,” &c. immediately presents itself, and carries on the thread of history to the time when the Gospels resume it. This, therefore, is a book which must be regarded as forming an essential part of the study which is here being traced.

The Gospels and Acts of the Apostles follow in course, as being parts of that chain of history which God has seen fit to reveal by inspiration. With them, and subsequently to them, Josephus should be read, on account of the light which his independent narrative tends to throw on the later period of the Jewish

people. With his work ceases their history as a nation; and we cannot but adore the providence, which in this way, permitted a Jewish pen to convey to all the world, the narrative of the tremendous judgments by which God cast off the people whom He had chosen, and executed the sentence they had brought upon themselves by their unbelief.

In the history of the church of Christ, which from this time occupies its proper place as the peculiar people, the chosen generation, two lines are to be followed.

The external history may be pursued, which is occupied with the circumstances in which the church was placed, with its trials, its struggles, and its progress as a community;—or that which is internal may be preferred; the line which traces the existence of the real people of God, as a people separate and distinct from others. The first is found in the Ecclesiastical History of Mosheim, chiefly known in England through its transla-

tion by Maclaine. The other is offered to us in the work begun by the Rev. Joseph Milner, carried on by his brother, the Dean of Carlisle, and still proceeding under the Rev. John Scott. Neither of these works can be neglected by him who wishes to become acquainted with the history of the church; for neither by itself would be sufficient. The work of Mosheim, if read alone, might seem to impugn the very fact of any other than the nominal existence of Christianity; and we should doubt whether a spark of real piety remained, amidst the accumulations of folly and corruption which he records. That there was such a remnant still existing, is shown with sufficient probability by Milner; and though from the very nature of things, truth was likely to be hid out of the sight of any general observer, and to be mixed with much alloy even in the minds where it was retained; no one can read Milner's history without secret delight at observing

the succession of men who were raised up from time to time, and by whom the lamp of life was conveyed from one to another through the darkness of the middle ages.

With the era of the Reformation a new state of things began. Different nations, in succession, threw off the yoke of the See of Rome; and in different degrees and forms asserted their independence, and adopted distinct religious establishments. The histories, before alluded to, give general information as to the measures which were pursued on the Continent, and the peculiarities of the Lutheran and Reformed churches. The Reformation in this country proceeded in a somewhat different order: and as it had the advantage of commencing with the higher classes, and was chiefly accomplished by the means of men who added, in no ordinary measure, learning and wisdom to piety and zeal, it had less of a revolutionary character than the

changes which were effected abroad, and more completely realized the idea of reformation which its name implied. On this account, as well as others, the history of the Reformation in England deserves a specific and attentive study; and the materials are abundant and of no difficult access.

The History of the Reformation, by Burnet, will naturally be first suggested; and though, as a composition, it is uninviting, and destitute of the warmth and interest which personal feelings threw into his History of his Own Times; it has received such sanction from the highest authorities of the land, and includes so many documents of importance, that it will ever form the standard of such inquiries. Strype's Annals may be consulted by those who have leisure for more accurate research; and Collier's Ecclesiastical History, or Fuller's Church History, may be read instead of Burnet, if they fall into the student's hands. But in

either of these latter authors he must guard against that party feeling which, growing out of the controversies of the day, warped, more or less, the rectitude of mind in almost all the later ecclesiastical historians.

It might seem superfluous to be adding to these names Burnet's History of his Own Times, if it was not felt that the history of these times was, in a peculiar sense, the history of the Church of England. The principles of church government, if not the doctrines of religion, were at that time the chief causes of disunion in politics. The civil wars had partaken more or less of the character of a religious contest; and the times which followed must be contemplated, not merely as giving rise to the civil constitution of Great Britain, but also as having drawn out and fixed the nature of her church establishment. For the purpose of chronicling the events which were passing at this crisis, Burnet possessed

singular advantages. He knew the temper of most of the parties which were so busily engaged; he had mixed in every line of society, both at home and abroad; and borne no ordinary share in some of the great movements which had taken place. But in addition, he knew and felt the importance of the ministerial office. He was capable of appreciating the blessed influence which belongs to an order of men, set apart for the purpose of inculcating, by precept as well as by example, the great truths of the gospel; and he felt what might have been done for England, had that spirit, which he delineates so touchingly in his *Pastoral Care*, been spread through all her clergy. He viewed the events of the day therefore, with the eye of a Christian, as well as with the glance of a politician; and those remarks on the state of the clergy, with which his history closes, may be read, even now, as some of the most instructive to be met with. Should Bur-

net's works, or the others which have just been mentioned, seem to be beyond the student's reach, he will find their absence well supplied by Mr. Soame's History of the Reformation of the Church of England; which indeed, in many respects, is better adapted to the exigences of the present time than the works which precede.

The history of the church in later years, whether external or internal, must be collected from other sources. Its external state indeed, offers little which can be considered as matter for history. Peace is proverbially unproductive of those events which add interest to historical narrative. Since the times of the Revolution no change of importance has been produced in the constitution of the Church, and no work in consequence has appeared, which deserves the name of a history.

The internal condition of the Church has however been more productive. Beyond those controversial works which, from time to time, have issued from its bosom,

and which may offer the materials for some future annalist; a variety of memoirs and biographical notices, the most delightful and not the most unprofitable species of literature, have appeared of late years; which contain the history of the Church in the history of individuals; and describe the progress of opinions and the growth of religion, by recording the characters which divine grace has raised and formed within the Church. In resources of this sort no age can bear comparison with this. The labour of the inquirer, no doubt, may be increased, when he has to collect from many, and frequently from discordant authorities, the tone and temper of the time; but edification is gained from the very circumstance which augments the difficulty of forming general views. The details of private life, which are thus laid open; the various pictures of the good man's walk with God; the exhibition of personal trials and personal efforts, conspire

to render this species of reading as profitable as it is generally found attractive. The chief difficulty will be found in the selection that it is desirable to make, and in the deference due to the several authors which may be read on either side; and this difficulty increases in proportion as we approach to the controversies of recent times, and have reason to suspect that the statements which we meet with are coloured by party spirit. The earliest narratives will therefore be read with the least suspicion; and the lives of those who contended for the very fundamentals of the gospel, will in some respects be more edifying than those of men, who were divided on points of less importance. To this cause, as well as to the simplicity of the historian's style, we may ascribe the popularity of Walton's *Lives*; a book which may safely be recommended to every Christian student. These lives are found in Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Biography*, combined with other memoirs

of equal interest; and forming a series with which every clergyman should be acquainted.

The Life of Wesley, by Southey, may also be read with advantage, if allowance is made for the defective views of the author on some important points of religious truth. With the Life of Wesley should be combined that of Fletcher, the most interesting if not the most eminent among his followers. And the records of his parochial ministry, at Madeley, may show us the result which might have been produced, if the fervour which burst forth in the system of the Methodists, had been restrained within the bounds of discipline, and had animated instead of dividing the Church from which it issued.

As we descend in time, our stream grows richer in this species of literature. The lives of Newton and Cecil are each of them replete with interest for the Christian student, as memorable instances of the power of the grace of God, and in-

structive narratives of a very influential ministry. The Remains of Mr. Cecil are peculiarly valuable to the student, as the reflections of a profound and original mind, exercised with all its energies, not so much on those mysteries which God seems to have reserved to himself and to have withheld from man, as on those great truths in which the reason of man seems permitted to exert itself, and which form the basis of ministerial usefulness.

The series of Biographical Memoirs, recently published by the Religious Tract Society, may also be recommended here; and some personal narratives are mentioned in a note below, which may be read with interest and advantage.* Succeeding years, it is trusted, will enlarge a list, which with regard to ministers of the

* Life of Archbishop Sharpe, by Sharpe; Life of Bishop Porteus, by Hodgson; Life of Bishop Wilson, by Stowell; Memoirs of Rev. Dr. Stewart; Life of Bishop Middleton; Life of Bishop James; Memoir of Rev. L. Richmond, by Grim-

Established Church, is still very limited, and inadequate to the value which such documents possess in reference to those, whose future progress may be influenced by the examples set before them.

But under the influence of that Spirit which was raising up such men as these within its bosom, the Church has begun to grow, and spread itself abroad. It has assumed, for the first time perhaps since the apostolic ages, a missionary character; and, instead of remaining fixed within itself, and limiting its efforts to self-preservation, it has begun aggressive movements on the waste of heathenism, and has attempted to extend to the millions which lie in darkness the knowledge of salvation through the Gospel.

A new species of history, that of the

shawe; Life of Rev. Thos. Scott; Memoirs of Rev. T. Robinson, by Vaughan; Memoirs of Rev. Thos. Lloyd; Memoir of the Rev. Basil Woodd.

Conquests of the Church, has thus been commenced, and we trust is beginning to unfold itself more largely. The memoirs of the few devoted men, who have led the way in this glorious work, form the first fruits of triumph which are to mark the extension of the kingdom of Christ among men.

The lives of Brainerd and Schwartz and of the American Pliny Fisk, together with those of our own Brown, and Buchanan, and H. Martyn, immediately present themselves here as objects of study; and with these may be read Crantz's History of the Missions in Greenland, Buchanan's Christian Researches in the East, and those of Jowett in the Mediterranean.

To these must also be added the Registers of the Church Missionary Society; not merely as containing the annals of the Missionary Church, but as abounding in biographical notices, full of interest in themselves, and exhibiting, under

every diversity of circumstance, the power of the grace of God and of his word.

These last indeed may be considered as forming to the theological student, what the records of the year do to the statesman or politician. But they not merely increase knowledge by the information they convey. They also tend to awaken devotional feelings by the touching simplicity of the narratives they include, and by the warmth and fervour which are characteristic of new converts.

In this manner, and by studies conducted on such a plan as this, it seems possible that a knowledge of history may be gained which should add consistency and clearness to our acquaintance with the doctrines of religion, by exhibiting these doctrines in their practical application. Those who possess leisure or taste for nicer and more accurate investigation, will find no difficulty in enlarging a list, which is here purposely narrowed, with a view to the circumstances of those for whom it is prepared.

One caution alone should be added to the student who pursues historical inquiry through the medium of biographical notices or memoirs. It should be borne in mind, that the author in this case is almost precluded, by the nature of his employment, from forming a calm and dispassionate judgment of the events which he is describing. He naturally adopts more or less the feelings and views of the person whose life he is describing; and whatever may be the deference due to his intelligence or general integrity, some consideration must be had for the bias under which he writes. The personal history of the men who have stood foremost in theological as well as in political contest, has too often been composed by those who felt more strongly for party than for truth; and has assumed the character which their followers chose to give it, as a defence or vindication of their own peculiar views. The sacredness of truth is thus sacrificed to the warmth of feeling,

and the reader who trusts himself implicitly to every statement which he meets with, is in danger of being carried about by every wind of doctrine, and of adopting the views of each successive party to which the subject of the memoir may belong. The biography of men of piety is not wholly exempt from this tendency. Piety is mixed in most with some peculiarities of doctrine or of practice ; and the individual who undertakes the office of historian, is generally biassed in favour of those opinions which render the character unfit for general imitation. Personal or party feelings in this way give a prominence to qualities which it might have been desirable to leave in the shade ; and much of general good is sacrificed to private partiality. For religion, though it strengthens every moral principle, and directly inculcates veracity and candour in statement, does likewise involve considerations of such magnitude ; that the increase of strength is not always in

proportion to the increase of the power which warps the judgment of the writer.

The few books which have been named above, are probably as free as any from this general objection; but the caution must not be considered as unnecessary, when a wider course of reading is contemplated. Nor can any thing be conceived more injurious to peace of mind and stability of opinion, than to be adopting the peculiar views of every author, and varying with the subject of each successive memoir. Excellent as each may be, none are to be taken as universal models. In each there may be something to be imitated, in each there may be something to be avoided; and even that which is good in one case, may be inapplicable or inexpedient in others. As a common rule it may be assumed, that the general impression, rather than the particular imitation, is the object to be considered; and mixed and imperfect as

human characters always are, it will be the part of wisdom to take that which is decidedly good, and to reject that which is questionable in its own nature, or inapplicable to the condition of him who reads.

To this we must also add, that the most remarkable, and in many respects the most instructive characters, have generally been formed under circumstances which gave a peculiar tone to their opinions; and in some degree unfitted them as models, for universal application.

The early events of Mr. Newton's, of Mr. Cecil's, and even of Mr. Scott's life, were calculated to affect the subsequent character of their religious views. The extraordinary circumstances through which the life of Newton was preserved, till the African blasphemer was made a preacher of the gospel, inevitably affected the system of religion he adopted, and the doctrines which he favoured.

But while we can conceive the effect which they must have had in his case, and can easily understand the fondness with which he dwelt on that grace, which had made him what he was; it is but reasonable to make allowance for the bias under which he argued, and to impute to the peculiarities of his history, some of the peculiarities of his system. The case is in a certain degree the same in every marked or unusual character; but it is not necessary to assume that those views are the only true ones, which are held with sincerity by them; or that the wonderful means by which some men are brought to the knowledge of the truth, must put the stamp of certainty on all their conclusions. It is manifest that God leads men by different ways to the same end. And it is not unnatural to suppose, that the particular views of each may derive some tinge from the circumstances through which they pass; while

their belief of those great truths, which are common to all, remains the same, untouched and unaffected by those events which are peculiar to themselves.

CHAPTER IX.

Parochial duties. — Preaching. — Sermons, written and extempore. — Catechising. — Exposition. — Cottage Lectures. — Schools and district visitors.

THE preceding chapters have been devoted to the consideration of the studies by which a clergyman may be fitted to fulfil the important duties of his office. A line of reading has been traced, which seems calculated to supply the information he will stand in need of; and though it is not supposed that all the books which are named, will be read by every individual who is looking forward to the ministry; still the list is intentionally so nar-

rowed, that it is hoped something will be known of all, or that the knowledge they offer will be collected from other sources. But while the line of study, which is to be the preparation for the ministry, is in these respects easily traced; it is obvious that the ministry itself includes many things which are hardly to be learned from books; and that after the education has been accomplished, and the learning been acquired, which seem essential to the office; the exercise of the office, and the employment of those acquisitions open a new field of inquiry and reflection.

The object of the present chapter therefore, shall be to describe certain parts of the ministerial office, which have not been touched upon before; and to name some of those usages and methods by which the parochial duties may be most easily discharged.

Under the first head, must be named that which is the spring and source of all the rest, a sense of the importance and

nature of the office itself. Unless this is gained, and deeply impressed upon the mind, even in the very outset of preparatory study, the progress will be unsteady, irrelevant, and inconclusive. The acquirements made, will be deficient in that which constitutes their usefulness; and the man will neither learn much, nor know how to employ that which he has learned, to the best advantage.

On this subject, therefore, a few books may be named, which should be read during the interval of preparation; for the purpose of exciting and of forming right views of the office which is contemplated.

Among these, it is easy to name at once Herbert's Country Parson, and Burnet's Pastoral Care, as books which every candidate for holy orders should endeavour to make his own by perusal and meditation. They are not works, which are to be read once for the information they may give, and which then may be

laid aside ; but they must be read and meditated upon, till the very spirit of the authors seems transferred into him that reads, and he begins to feel as they did.

The age at which Herbert lived, and the difference in habits of life which has since taken place, may seem to render the Country Parson less profitable than similar works ; but it is not only valuable in itself from the primitive simplicity of its tone, and its warm and ardent piety ; but it is also valuable as exhibiting what was the character of the country clergyman in the views of those, who approached to the very era of the Reformation. Of Burnet's Book it is impossible to speak too highly, or to recommend it too warmly even to men of the present day. These two, with some other valuable tracts, have been published by the Clarendon Press, under the title of The Clergyman's Instructor, and are easily and cheaply procured. To these it is impossible not to add the Reformed Pastor of Richard

Baxter; a book too widely known and too generally valued to need a word in its behalf at present. It will be read with most advantage in the abridgment published by the Rev. D. Wilson, and with the spirit-stirring preface he has added. In addition to these, the Essays by the Rev. C. S. Wilks* may be named, and the valuable work of the Rev. C. Bridges;† and this last, not merely for the general information which it gives, but for the remarks specifically addressed to this point, and the spirit which pervades the whole volume. It is to be hoped that any young man who shall have read these works attentively, and meditated on them, will need little more in the way of instruction. It is to be hoped, that the feeling which breathes through them will be made the means of

* Correlative Claims and Duties, by the Rev. C. S. Wilks. Signs of Conversion and Unconversion, &c. by the same.

† The Christian Ministry, by the Rev. C. Bridges.

kindling a similar warmth in his own heart, and send him forth to the work of the ministry in that spirit of Christian devotedness and zeal, which alone can make the office a source of comfort to himself, and of blessing to others.

But beyond those general feelings which it is essential to form, there are certain specific duties involved in the ministerial office, which demand more particular consideration. He is called, specifically called to preach the word. This is the chief, the peculiar part of his work; and without overlooking or undervaluing those several branches which may be subsequently discussed; it is in the pulpit that he appears as the ambassador for Christ, as the herald of salvation, the messenger of reconciliation. For this purpose his previous education has been including studies, the chief end of which was to strengthen his reasoning faculty, or to enlarge his powers of illustration. For this purpose, literature has

been added to theology ; and some knowledge of the art of explaining and enforcing truth, has been combined with knowledge of the great truths which are to be believed. Little, it is true, has been done towards realizing this end, by the resources which a common education includes. The materials for the preacher are in some degree provided ; but the art, the proper, the specific art of him, who is to employ them, who is to exercise his powers in persuading, in convincing others, as yet is left to be acquired where it may be, from experience, from imitation, from reflection, or the mere bias of constitution.

It is impossible to contemplate calmly the situation of a young man, who is first called to appear in this most important, most responsible post ; and who ascends the pulpit with little advantage from previous instruction, and with none from previous exercise. It is impossible to see him, preparing to teach others, and

to see hundreds hanging on his lips, for that word which is to feed their souls ; without mourning over the circumstances under which this part of the ministry is generally commenced. He may have knowledge, he may have zeal, he may have affection, he may have qualities which hereafter may render him eminently useful ; but his first efforts in preaching are generally nothing better than experiments, and experiments which only lead to conviction of error. He naturally begins by imitating the manner of some one whom he has been accustomed to admire, or by attempting some mode which he has been imagining to himself ; but his first efforts are attempts in an art which he has never studied, and where he has no adviser to direct him. Even the theory of the system is unknown ; and it is probable that years must elapse, before experience and reflection will lead him to discover that mode of preaching which is suited to his

powers, and best calculated to edify his hearers.

With regard to the composition of a sermon, Claude's Essay affords the best and almost the only system of rules to be followed by a preacher. Some valuable remarks on the subject are also to be found in Mr. Bridges' Christian Ministry, and in the work of Mr. Budd on Infant Baptism. These indeed are more likely to be profitable to the student at present, than the more elaborate work of Claude ; and both, but especially the remarks in Mr. Budd's volume, deserve long and serious consideration.

Beyond the general views which may be derived from hence, as to the nature of preaching ; the mere arrangement of a sermon requires some preparatory study. For this purpose the *Thesaurus Theologicus* of Beveridge, or any more recent work of the same kind, should be consulted ; in order to accustom the mind to the manner in which a text

may be drawn out, divided, illustrated, and applied. The skeletons of Sermons, and the *Horæ Homileticæ* of Mr. Simeon are eminently useful for the same end, by the numerous models for composition which they contain. And though it may be desirable for a young minister to aim at greater simplicity of arrangement, than is usually met with in these works, they are still admirably calculated to show the way in which a subject may be divided, as well as to enrich the mind by the copious illustrations they supply. By the attentive study of these, something may be done, even in private, as to the composition of a sermon. The mind may become accustomed to the division of a subject, and the arrangement of its parts. The habit of reasoning closely and with connexion may be formed. A power of illustration may be gained. But much will still be wanting to make the preacher what he ought to be, or to fit him for the office he is to fill. That still

remains, to which the orator of antiquity assigned the most important place among the qualifications of his art; and though *Action*, in our acceptation of the word, differs much from that which was implied in his; there can be no doubt, that the way in which a sermon is prepared, and the way in which a sermon is delivered, is a point of too much consequence to be left to the discretion of every inexperienced judgment. It is not easy to suggest a plan by which this defect may be immediately supplied; but no one who appreciates the importance of the office, can avoid indulging a wish; that previous to ascending the pulpit, previous to entering on the public duties of the ministry, there had been some preparatory discipline, by which the powers of the preacher had been exercised; and some judicious admonition by which the tone and style of his preaching had been formed.

The talents of men are so various, the

situations in which they may be placed are so different from each other, that it would be vain to suppose, that any system laid down in books should meet all cases ; or that any one style of preaching should suit every man, and be adapted to every congregation. For these points, something of personal instruction, the remarks and advice of men of age and experience seem indispensably necessary ; and resources such as these, may perhaps hereafter be obtained.

Notwithstanding this, it is necessary to say that there are certain primary qualities, which seem almost essential to usefulness ; without which, no great or permanent edification can be reasonably expected, and which everyone should regard as the means through which a blessing is to be sought. Of these it might be obvious to mention, clearness in statement, both as regards division of subject and language ; seriousness of manner ; earnestness of tone ; and that indescribable

mixture of fervour and of affection, which is usually known by the name of unction. These not being the results of any particular talents, but rather the expression of that state of mind which we feel to be implied in the office; are looked for in all who undertake it, and may justly be required from all: but even these may be mixed up in degrees and combinations so different from each other, that while we feel that all are requisite, it is impossible to state how much of each must prevail in any particular case. Subordinate to these, come those other qualities, which, as they are less essential, may vary indefinitely in the case of different individuals, without detracting from the usefulness of each, and which form what is commonly called their manner. At present this in general arises from imitation; from the insensible imitation of a style of preaching associated with early impressions; or the more laboured imitations of a style which has struck the

fancy in later years. But in either case, imitation may produce a style little suited to the powers of the person whose choice is thus decided; and the line which was marked out for him by his own peculiar constitution, the line in which there would have been the most effect, with the least of effort, may be deserted, in the vain attempt of rivalling the success of others.

If men were generally aware of the charm that belongs to simplicity; or, if they did but bear in mind, that gifts may be various in quality, while they are equal in amount; and that each man's duty rather leads him to cultivate his own gift, than to covet those of others; the general style of preaching would be less ambitious than it is at present, but probably more useful; and men, instead of labouring to assume and to support a tone which was not natural, would be improving one which was capable of indefinite improvement, if they followed up the course which strictly seemed their own.

Peculiarities of manner would unquestionably remain, and might be more strongly developed on this plan; but in truth, manner does not signify much, where other qualities of greater importance are not wanting. It is a matter of experience, that those peculiarities of dialect or action in a preacher, which are most offensive to strangers, produce no unpleasing effect on those who are attached to his ministry. In that case, familiarity removes the sense of his defects; and while they are associated with qualities which excite veneration and regard, they rather increase than weaken their influence. If we find likewise that inspiration itself produced no uniformity of style or manner; if the language of one apostle differs from that of the other, though all speak by the same spirit; we seem authorized in wishing that every man should assume the tone and the manner which is natural to him; and while he endeavours to speak as the

oracles of God, should still deliver his message according to the powers which he has received.

Another question of this kind, and one which is frequently agitated, relates to the use of written or extempore sermons; and the importance attached to the subject may perhaps preclude its being left among the non-essentials, where the course which each individual adopts, should be decided by the peculiarities of his mind, and his position in the Church.

One thing seems certain, that though the power of preaching extempore may probably, and in some degree be gained by all, it is acquired with much greater facility by some men than by others; and that if there is one talent which more than another deserves to be considered as a gift, it is this. Learning will not produce it; knowledge, imagination, reasoning powers, warmth of feeling, piety, all the qualities which seem essential to ministerial usefulness, may be possessed

in a very considerable degree, and still, if they are not compounded in a manner, which it is not for man to specify or describe, they may fail in producing this result, and impede, rather than facilitate, the power which is wished for. To some men it seems to come with a sort of spontaneous ease, which we are unable to account for. In the case of others, not inferior to them in any quality which may seem essential to the faculty, it is laboured for, and laboured for in vain. The thoughts rise too rapidly, or too slowly; the feelings are too weak to give force to the delivery, or so strong that they obstruct it: the imagination is too fertile, or too barren; and the mind, which can reason powerfully and conclusively in the retirement of the closet, loses all self-possession in public, through the weakness of a nervous temperament, or the diffidence of extreme humility. In a case like this, it would be unjust to impose one only method for all, where

the state of none was the same; or to lay down one system, to which every intellect and every character should be formed.

That each system has its advantage, the most zealous advocates of either are found to concede. And since it seems impossible that all should adopt one plan with equal facility, or practise it with equal success, it seems best to advise, that each taking the line to which the peculiar frame of his mind directs him, should labour to excel in the manner which is most natural to him, without aiming at any laborious eminence in that for which he feels no bias.

Each, however, should bear in mind the failing to which his peculiar method is most exposed, and be on his guard against it. The preacher who writes his sermons, must remember, that compositions prepared in the study are apt to come out in the language of the study, too learned, too refined, too elevated for com-

mon hearers; and should labour to obtain clearness of statement and simplicity of language. Those sermons also which are written in retirement, are naturally apt to be deficient in animation; they become essays rather than addresses, and as such are too often systematic, cold, and unimpassioned. This evil must be met by awakening, even in the closet, the feelings of one who stands as the minister of God, and who sees the eternal interests of his hearers at stake; it must be met by a spirit of Christian love, excited by prayer and meditation. The danger which still remains of coldness, must be avoided by warmth and fervour in delivery; nor can we doubt, that by God's blessing on exertions such as these, all the peculiar evils of written composition might be obviated, and as large a measure of usefulness be obtained, as it is possible to hope for.

Nor must the extempore preacher forget, that his style is still more exposed

to danger, though the voice of public feeling may speak strongly in its favour. That facility of utterance, which probably decides his choice as to the line of preaching he adopts, too often leads him to forget the necessity of previous study, and preparation for the pulpit. The apparent success of his ministry seems a convincing proof of the power which accompanies it. The crowds which are attracted, are considered as seals, which it would be incredulity to doubt; and while fluency of speech, and an animated enunciation of certain great truths, continue to secure their attendance, no doubt rises as to the blessing under which he is labouring, or the sufficiency of the gospel which he preaches. But during all this time, his hearers may have only been attracted to the talent which dazzled them, not converted to the truth as it is in Jesus. Their impressions may have been lively, but not deep nor abiding: their views of the gospel may have been

strong, but neither full nor consistent ; and after several years of brilliant display, and general admiration, he may find that his congregation is drawn away to some newer and more attractive rival ; or falling into inconsistencies of doctrine or practice which affect the very integrity of their faith. Knowing that such may be the case, and often has been so, let the extempore preacher remember, that the gift in which he glories, was not given to supersede the necessity of study, of meditation, of laborious cultivation of his mental powers, but to assist in their development, and to contribute to their usefulness. Like the gift of tongues in apostolic times, it is the most specious, but it is also the most illusive quality in the preacher ; and though when properly employed, when discreetly used, it may be a powerful instrument of good, he must never lose sight of its real nature, nor cease to consider it merely as an instrument which depends on other qua-

lities for the good which it is to produce.

But while there are some advantages to be named on this side, let not any one to whom God does not seem to have granted the qualities essential to it, be tempted to despondency on that account. Some of those individuals whom the grace of God has made eminently and widely useful, have never seen fit to adopt the practice. Their heart has spoken through the medium of the pen; and the feeling with which they delivered in the pulpit, what had been prepared in the closet, has rescued their ministrations from the charge of coldness and languor.

Let but a sermon be prepared under the influence of prayer; let it but be aimed at the souls of men, and be delivered from a heart overflowing with love to those who are addressed, and the difference will be small, whether it lies on paper before the preacher, or is only lodged in the recesses of his mind. Its

final success depends upon the grace of God; and that grace will generally accompany the most faithful labours, and the most earnest prayers, whatever may have been the manner or mode in which they have been exerted.

Nor should we forget to bear in mind, that those evils which seem to belong to written sermons may be more easily detected and avoided, while those which belong to the extempore mode seem inherent in the system itself. The present practice of the Scottish Church is strongly in favour of the adoption of written discourses; and if extempore addresses are best calculated to produce effect, it is probable that edification will be more generally promoted by those which are written.

At all events, the dangers connected with extempore preaching are so many and so obvious, that it should never be attempted by those, who perhaps are most disposed to adopt it—by the young,

the warm, and the inexperienced. It should be deferred till the judgment has gained maturity, till the mind has been enriched with a large variety of knowledge, and till some security has been gained by these acquirements against the dangers of sameness and precipitancy.

Too much importance has undoubtedly been given to that which is merely human in this question ; and men seem to have lost sight of their absolute dependence on the grace of God, in comparing the degrees of excitement produced by the instruments their Maker employs. Greater good would be effected, more of solid edification would be gained, if they thought more about the truths which they heard, and less about the manner in which those truths were delivered. On the other hand, ministers would feel less of reserve, less of that embarrassment which frequently prevents exertion, if they agreed in considering their powers merely as gifts which God bestows in various

measures to different men. If the quick extemporaneous preacher did not despise his slower brother, and if the deliverer of his studied sermon did not judge his more brilliant brother ; but if each, in the fulness of Christian charity, believed of the other, that God had received him, and looked to the edification which followed, rather than to the effect which was produced.

But while these peculiarities must be left in some degree to the judgment of individuals, there are other points of less dubious character, and which must be universally impressed as being necessary to all. Of these one of the first is clearness of statement. Knowledge of the truth and faithfulness are comparatively of little avail, if they are not accompanied by accuracy of view, and clearness in the exhibition of doctrine. The circumstances under which sermons are delivered, the difficulty that there is in many places of easy and confidential inter-

course between the minister and his people, render it peculiarly necessary that the statements of important truths, as uttered from the pulpit, should be intelligible to all his hearers. Nor is this a faculty of such easy acquirement as might be supposed. The language which education renders simple to some minds, is too elevated for the comprehension of others; and a statement may be made, which shall be correctly true in itself, and intelligible to literary hearers, which shall still be raised above the comprehension of others. In other cases, a man may understand a doctrine, and still may not be capable of explaining it distinctly: he may not have accustomed himself to watch the progress by which the mind advances to truth; and from want of habit, may literally be incapable of explaining the things which he perfectly comprehends. In still more cases, the comprehension of truth itself has been imperfect. The views have not been

cleared and regulated by reflection or discussion ; and the confusion which prevails in statement is merely the exhibition of the confusion which exists in the mind.

But in all these cases, the effect produced by a sermon, even the sermon of a wise and pious man, will be very uncertain and very inadequate. Dull and torpid as the minds of men commonly are, a very moderate defect in clearness will prevent its being at all understood ; and much and painful disappointment may be felt at the want of success in some laborious and faithful ministry, where all might have been attributed to this defect alone.

Connected with this, is simplicity of language. Language is the vehicle by which our thoughts are conveyed ; and it is not merely necessary that the arrangement of these should be luminous, but the medium in which they are presented must be likewise clear, or else no light

will be transmitted. One of the chief advantages belonging to extempore sermons, seems to be the inducement to adopt a more colloquial, and therefore a more intelligible sort of language; but whatever may be the mode of preaching, it should be remembered, that from neglect of this, a man may speak in his native language, and yet be speaking in an unknown tongue to great part of his congregation.

In former times, the conceit of learning induced preachers to fill their sermons with quotations from ancient writers, and thus to sacrifice edification to display; or at best, to seek the one through the means of the other. That conceit is exploded, but one error invariably succeeds another; and the conceit of intellect may perhaps be as injurious in our days to common edification, as that of erudition was in the time of our ancestors.

To men of literary habits, and excited

imaginations, a language abounding in metaphor and allusion, possesses considerable attraction ; but they are apt in the meanwhile to forget, that that brilliancy which amuses a few, leaves many in utter darkness ; and the figures of speech with which a multifarious literature has enriched our tongue, are to the many, as unintelligible as the Greek and Latin quotations of the earlier divines.

But it would be a mistake to suppose, that simplicity of language precludes elegance, or force, or any of those qualities which are essential to oratorical effect. The great orator of Athens indeed, may alone be named as sufficient to prove, that they are capable of combination in the largest measure ; and our own experience may probably have convinced us already, that turgid language has generally weakened the impression that was intended, and that the greatest effect has been produced by the simplest words.

To these should be added, application

of the subject. A sermon without an application, is like a letter without an address. It may be good, useful, instructive, but it seems to belong to no one; and no one therefore takes it to himself, or is profited by it.

We cannot but remember the force which a very simple parable possessed in the mouth of one man of God, when the application, "Thou art the man," was immediate, and personal, and irresistible. And though this is an illustration, rather than a model of the rule, it shows what the effect of application may be. Most of the very powerful preachers have dealt much in application, which is indeed, in the case of the Christian minister, all that was implied by the peroration of the Roman orator. Those great masters of the art laid down their rules for this most important member of the speech; and showed their sense of its value, by the labours they bestowed on its production. In the preacher's office,

it is not to be the result of any artificial arrangement, it must rather be the overflowing of a heart, filled with the importance of the truths which he has been explaining, and bursting with love for the souls of those whom he is addressing. It seems, as if his sense of the value of the doctrines he had been considering, constrained him to turn to those whom he beholds ; and to carry to them individually, or in the several divisions, under which his personal knowledge induces him to regard them, the inferences which press on his observation. He sees some careless, who must be awakened ; some disobedient, who must be rebuked ; some doubting, who must be satisfied ; some fainting, who must be comforted ; some going on unto perfection, who must be directed ; and his duty will be, to apply to each, according to their several degrees or wants, the truth he has been deducing from his text.

The application which is made under

such a rule as this can hardly be offensive. The love which makes it particular, will prevent its being personal; and he who shows that he only speaks with earnestness, because he is anxious for the good of others, will seldom find his warmth misinterpreted by those whom he addresses.

But the pulpit, however great the value of the ministrations belonging to it, includes merely a part of the clergyman's duties. There are other employments of a kindred nature, hardly inferior to it in value, and essential to its usefulness. Among these, we must name exposition, or facility of expounding Scripture, and accompanying the explanation of the sense by application to the cases of men. In many places, this has been found a very valuable substitute for the pulpit ministrations of part of the day; and has supplied a more general and connected view of Scripture truth, than was easily given through the medium of sermons.

In all places it should be regarded as an essential accomplishment to a clergyman ; and whether practised in church under the name of an expository lecture ; in the parish workhouse, as an address to those who from age and weakness cannot attend church ; in the parlour or the cottage ; it should be regarded as a special means, under God's blessing, of diffusing a general and an experimental knowledge of divine truth.

The difficulties which may be felt, or the evils which may be feared in the case of extempore preaching, have no existence here. The circumstance that it is Scripture which is before the eye, prevents the rambling, incoherent language which sometimes prevails in an unpremeditated address. The succession of doctrines obviates the danger of monotony ; and those who have the least of natural fluency, may soon gain sufficient facility to explain with clearness, what they have well understood and previously digested.

Next in importance to this habit of exposition, stands that of catechising, or instruction by question and answer. By this word it is not necessary merely to understand the hearing and explaining of the Church Catechism; but the general exercise of that mode of instruction of which the Church Catechism is at once a specimen and a model. It is properly, the Catechesis, or that mode of oral instruction, by question and answer, which seems to have been introduced by the apostles; * which has been practised under one form or other by the Church of Christ in every age and in every country; and which seems, under God's blessing, the only instrument by which the dulness and aversion of the mind can be overcome, and religious truth be grafted on the heart. It is in itself the simplest, but at the same time the most efficient means for diffusing the knowledge of the gospel; and it not only

* Lukei. 4; Gal. vi. 6.

assists the effect of preaching, but is actually so essential to its success, that unless the mind has had some previous training by this sort of instruction, the most powerful addresses from the pulpit may be heard in vain.

It is desirable, therefore, to keep in view the separate provinces of these two offices. It is the business of catechising to instil into the mind the first simple truths of the gospel, its doctrines and its duties, and thus to render man a Christian in knowledge, as well as in name. Preaching the word assumes the fact, which catechising implies. The Christian preacher addresses himself to a congregation whom he considers as Christians; and instead of beginning again with them the rudiments of the faith, he conceives himself called to feed them, not as babes, but as men; and to draw out, and illustrate, and apply those truths which they have already received and heard. If he is mistaken in this idea, if

neglect or circumstances have debarred them from this elementary knowledge, his office is in some measure neutralized : he does not possess the means which ought to belong to him ; and he must adopt some specific mode for remedying a defect, which will otherwise impede, if not destroy, his usefulness. In every case therefore, where ignorance exists as to the elementary truths of the gospel, catechising, assiduous, persevering catechising must be the minister's resource : for the instruction which catechising offers, is the specific cure for that ignorance which he has to combat ; and unless he succeeds by this or other means in removing it, his preaching will be comparatively unproductive.

Catechising, therefore, must be regarded as the appropriate system to be followed towards those, who may be denominated babes in Christ ; whether young in years, or young in knowledge. In the case of children the course seems easy

and plain. Practice, and perhaps nothing but practice, soon produces facility in the exercise, and enables the minister to adapt his language, tone, and illustrations, to the capacity of his hearers. His chief effort must be, to keep himself down to their standard—to remember, that there is no degree of ignorance, which he must not expect to meet; and that there is no truth, which is not more clearly understood by being recalled to the consideration, and presented under some new form. He will soon perceive, that from the earliest age, men are disposed to rest in words instead of rising to the ideas which they express; and to shelter themselves by every possible evasion from the trouble of thinking. The difficulties of the work, it is probable, will appear to multiply as he advances, and discovers the extent of the darkness by which he is surrounded. But the discovery must increase his diligence instead of overwhelming it. If the prospect

seems arduous, he must remember, that it merely includes realities which he is called to combat ; and he must embrace the more thankfully, and use the more diligently, those means for its relief, which are sanctioned by so many promises.

As a cheering proof of what may be effected by this system in a situation of no ordinary difficulty, the *Horæ Catecheticæ* of the Rev. W. S. Gilly should certainly be read. The nature of the system, the details of the process by which it is to be carried on, may be studied advantageously in the different books which have been published on the subject by Mr. Gall, of Edinburgh. The steps to be pursued may perhaps be varied beneficially, according to circumstances ; but as models of catechetical exercises, these books will be useful in describing the slow and gradual method in which the foundation of religious knowledge must be laid. Every clergyman who enters on a cure which has been

long neglected, and seriously applies to the work of edification, must be content to give many painful hours to this simple but important office. “Precept must be upon precept; line upon line; here a little, and there a little;”* and for those, who, either in years or in knowledge, are of tender age, catechising must long be considered as the special medium of religious instruction. Nor need the minister confine himself to the Church Catechism for this exercise, though he will naturally make use of that as the body of his parochial divinity; but the Scripture, either read in series, or in the portions selected by the church service; the Liturgy in all its several parts; all, in short, that must be understood in order to edification, may form from time to time the subject matter of his catechetical exercises.

He will find considerable advantage likewise—an advantage in which he him-

* Isaiah xxviii. 20.

self will share—if he succeeds in carrying this system to those of a later age. In the Protestant churches on the Continent, this mode of instruction does not cease till the individual has been admitted to the table of the Lord; and the examination during the two years immediately preceding this act—the most critical and important period of life—generally exceeds in frequency and closeness any of the earlier time. The system of Bible classes, which was chiefly made known in England by a posthumous publication of the Rev. B. Allen, of Philadelphia, has been adopted by several clergymen with regard to young people of superior attainments in religious knowledge, and invariably with very satisfactory results.

The general catechising of the adult part of the population is attended with greater difficulty, and can only be recommended conditionally. The practice of Baxter at Kidderminster, shows what may be done even in this respect; and

where a minister's love for his people has been proved by years, there is every reason to hope, that the influence he has gained will overcome the reluctance that might be felt, and induce many of all ages to submit to such an usage. But where this is not done, a zealous minister may still find that there are other means by which the same result may be obtained. The parents may be catechised through the children: the instruction, directly addressed to the young, may be indirectly raised towards the old; and in those cottage readings which now generally form part of every well-digested parochial system, it is not difficult to get a few to be catechised, through whom a whole party may be taught all that is necessary for them to know.

These cottage lectures form another, and an important branch of parochial usefulness. In many of our larger parishes, a considerable number of people are almost

precluded from the opportunity of attending the regular services of the Church. Distance of home, badness of roads, bodily infirmity, or the care of children, offer impediments which no zeal can overcome, even where the church accommodation is abundant ; and from these causes, many mothers of families, and many other persons from the circumstances alluded to, are cut off from all participation in these means of grace. The occasional visits with which the faithful pastor will endeavour to relieve these disabilities, must of necessity, if his charge is extensive, be rare, and in consequence unsatisfactory ; and it is expedient, therefore, to collect, at stated places, and at certain times, all those scattered individuals who cannot be expected to attend at church. In most hamlets some cottage can be selected, which shall offer space for the few who may be assembled together ; and the persons who cannot by any possible exertion reach the parish church,

may be instructed to meet their minister, at the house he may choose to appoint, during the week. To this point, therefore, may come the mothers who are unable to leave their children; the old, the invalid, and the weak. A portion of Scripture may be read to them, and explained in a familiar manner; a few prayers, selected from the Liturgy, may be used; and by this simple means, the bond of parochial communion may be preserved, and a knowledge of divine truth be kept alive in minds, that might otherwise have been languishing in solitude and ignorance. It is a plan which has now been tried in various situations, and with the most satisfactory results; nor is it easy to imagine, how the superintendence of a large parish can be carried on in any other manner.* It is in small assemblies like these, where the instruction given assumes something of the domestic character, that catechising

* See "Parochial Hints," published by Hatchard.

of this indirect sort may be attempted with the greatest ease. Young persons, above the age of those who attend schools, may be frequently collected here; to whom, and through whom, those questions may be addressed, which are intended to enlighten and inform the old. The simplicity of their answers may, in some cases, be more instructive than the language of the minister: they will probably express the feelings, the thoughts, of the circle to which they belong; they may frequently be made the instruments of seeking that information which is desired by others; and, at all events, that excitement of the reasoning faculties which questioning produces, will be transferred from them to those who listen; whose minds will be anticipating the reply almost before it is uttered; and who thus will share, as much as is possible, in all the benefits belonging to this method of instruction.

These may be considered as the chief branches of direct parochial ministry. In these three forms, as a preacher, as an expounder, or as a catechist, the clergyman appears regularly as a dispenser of the bread of life, as doing the work of an evangelist, as an ambassador for Christ. There are other duties, however, connected with these, and subservient to these, which he will not neglect. His parochial schools will naturally claim a part of his attention ; though the share he takes in their superintendence and management must depend on his health, his strength, and the extent of his other avocations. It is desirable, at all events, that he should previously be well acquainted with the system of infant, of national, and of adult schools ; and capable of exercising over any, or all of them, that superintendence which must, in general cases, be required from him. In small parishes the management of the Sunday

school sometimes rests entirely upon the minister, and no one can be found to whom it can be delegated with comfort. In such a case, and while his own duties are easy, this may form a natural part of the employments of the day; but, otherwise, whenever help can be found, and his own precious time hardly admits of such deductions, he should consider that it is rather his duty to raise up Sunday school teachers, than to act in that capacity himself; and should aim at forming others for the office, instead of taking it exclusively as his own. In fact, no Sunday school realizes its character, unless it is conducted by voluntary teachers. This circumstance alone vindicates its peculiar character, and separates it effectually from the ordinary school of the week-day. All restraint beyond that which may be necessary for the regularity and quiet of the proceedings; all harshness, all show of discipline, should be avoided as much as possible in

a school of this kind. Freedom and kindness should prevail in all its arrangements, and love should be the motive by which the whole is carried on. But no machinery can be contrived to act in this manner, except through the attendance of voluntary teachers, interested in the welfare of the children, and anxious to lead them forward in Christian principles as well as in Christian knowledge. They come to the office with a freshness of feeling, which can hardly be looked for in one wearied out with the business of teaching through the week, and incapable of laying aside the manners which he has found it necessary to be assuming in general. They awaken no associations of fear or dislike in the children's minds; but, on the contrary, are likely to possess some claim on their respect and their regard. Having no wish to exercise severity, they naturally try to win the affections in order to draw out exertion; and it is only by the employment of an

agency such as theirs, that advancement in knowledge can be combined with the enjoyment of sabbath rest. The clergyman, then, who succeeds in forming a body of voluntary teachers for his Sunday school, has realized no ordinary advantage. He has secured, in all probability, the efficiency of this most important means of knowledge; he has relieved himself from a charge which must often exceed his strength, and might affect the frame of mind which he desires to preserve; but beyond this, he has opened to the individuals whom he induces to act as teachers, a field of the most interesting and edifying employment. Labours thus communicated are doubly blessed. They bless him who invites co-operation, and those who are made partakers; and by extending to many, those cares which might be overpowering to one, they make all happy through the division of a work which would have been otherwise a burden on

him who had to bear it all. Wherever teachers of this kind can be found, ready to conform to the system which is laid down for their proceedings, they can hardly be too numerous. It is desirable in schools of this kind, to assimilate the mode of instruction as much as possible to that which is pursued in families; and if the class under the care of a single teacher did not exceed eight or ten children, the teaching would become more particular, more affectionate, and more interesting to both parties. But, whatever may be the number of teachers engaged, the tone of instruction made use of in conducting a Sunday school, should be peculiar and distinct. Emulation, and the other means of excitement which are thought necessary in other schools, should be absolutely deprecated here; and as the only instruction to be given is that which leads the soul to God, through that way which He has opened in his Son; the tone, the manner in which that

instruction is conveyed should harmonize with the subject, and be as much as possible conformed to the spirit of the gospel which is taught.

But this is not easily accomplished, where the classes are large and the teachers few. Some degree of quickness, if not severity of manner will seem necessary, to check the indolence and unsteadiness which in this case must be looked for; and the peculiar character of the school will be sacrificed to the discipline which is required to preserve its efficiency. To this we must also add, that it is hardly possible that teachers should feel the same lively interest in the welfare and progress of the children, where their attention is divided among many, as when it is limited to a few. The feeling which assumes a sort of parental character, when directed towards a small number, melts into general benevolence when diffused over many; and none can obtain much regard, where many

are claiming some. If a clergyman, therefore, possesses the means of increasing the number of his voluntary teachers, he will find it his advantage to admit as many as can be employed without confusion. The school will be benefited by this enlargement of its resources; but what is of hardly less importance, a greater number of individuals will hereby become engaged in a work, which tends perhaps more than any other to decide the character, and to form a taste for the purest species of benevolence; the benevolence which aims at the spiritual good of our fellow-creatures, and pursues it by personal sacrifices and personal exertions.*

* The most beautiful exhibition of the extent to which Sunday school instruction may be carried, and of the benefits which may thus be imparted to every class of society, is to be found in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire. The Sunday schools of Bolton contain twelve hundred children, taught by gratuitous teachers; many of whom have never left the school, but having been originally admitted as children, and having passed through all the classes,

Nor should this species of assistance, which is essential to the efficiency of a Sunday school, be neglected with regard to daily or national schools. If co-operation can be obtained from the laity for these objects, there is no doubt that the interests of the school will be materially advanced; the monotony of the system will be relieved; animation and intelligence will be excited in the children by the questions which are addressed to them by their stated visitors; and every

have risen from the rank of scholars to that of teachers, at the time of their confirmation, and have continued to attend in this capacity the schools which they first entered in another. There are teachers in those schools of thirty-five years of age, who have never been absent a single Sunday since the period of their first admission, except from causes which prevented their attendance.

Who that hears of such a plan as this in operation, can avoid regretting, that the Church was ever influenced by jealousy of a system, which seems more than any other calculated to promote its security and to extend its usefulness?

one who is aware of the difficulty that there is in awakening the powers of thought, and still more the sensibilities of the heart, to the object of religious education, will feel that no means should be neglected which contribute to so desirable an end.

Another portion of a minister's duty is next to be considered, which invites this species of co-operation more imperiously. As parochial minister, he is charged with the whole of the parish committed to his care. The charge has been committed to him, without any reference to the amount of its burdens, or to his powers of sustaining it; and he, in accepting the charge, stands pledged to the fulfilment of the duties which his official character implies. But these, to say the least, imply personal knowledge of the individuals included in his charge. He is called to watch for their souls as one that must give account; he is to teach and to premonish, to feed and pro-

vide, for the Lord's family; he is solemnly exhorted never to cease his labour, his care, and diligence, until he hath done all that lieth in him, according to his bounden duty, to bring all such as are committed to his charge into that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among them, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life. But how can this be done, without personal knowledge? How can these essential parts of ministerial duty be accomplished without a real acquaintance with the persons included in his sphere? In the smaller parishes, or even in cases where the population does not exceed two or three thousand, it is to be hoped that the assiduity of a diligent minister will in a moderate period, accomplish this object, and enable him to obtain a personal acquaintance of the individuals in his flock, at least of the adult part; and that his

Speculum Gregis may be found lying on his table, filled with the names and circumstances of all, and enriched with many observations which his experience has collected for future guidance.

In such cases therefore, little more may be necessary, than a general visitation of the parish, commenced at his first entrance, and a statement of the results of his first inquiries exhibited in the form of that *Speculum Gregis*,* which now forms, it is hoped, the basis of proceedings in many of our country parishes. With this aid to his memory, and with knowledge which accumulates upon him from the observations of every day, the shepherd may hope to know every sheep in his flock; and that, not only by face, but with some degree of understanding of their spiritual attainments, or spiritual wants.

There are, however, other cases where this is impracticable from the number or

* Published by Rivington, price 2s. 6d.

distance of the inhabitants ; and where a conscientious minister must be constrained, however reluctant he may feel, to resign some portion of the office which he considers as his own, and to devolve it upon others. And strange as it may seem, the more conscientious the minister, the more speedily, the more decisively will this arrangement be formed. The man who feels for souls, as a minister is bound to feel ; who sees them daily carried away from God by the torrent of sin, acting on ignorant and unstable minds ; the man who feels most deeply his own insufficiency for the work, by taking the largest and the highest view of its importance ; this man will be the first to ask for succour and assistance in a work to which he feels himself unequal. His prayers no doubt will be incessant for this object ; he will feel, and he will value the resource of prayer ; he will rejoice to apply it to himself in the fullest extent of the promise. But he will like-

wise know, that the use of prayer does not exclude the use of means; nor the amplest reliance upon prayer encourage him who prays, in expecting impossibilities. He is conscious therefore, that it would be idle to expect from prayer, such a measure of strength as should raise him above the level of man; nor will he think that he can do by prayer alone, what God has ordained should be done by the agency of others. He asks therefore, not for powers such as man does not possess, but for a full measure of that help which may be derived from man; and he rejoices to see the answer to his prayers exhibited in the willing and faithful co-operation of those whom God raises up for his assistance.

In such a situation therefore, the minister must learn to consider himself not so much as the personal visitor of his people, as the former, as the inspector of visitors. He must submit to the circumstances of his case, and instead of ex-

hausting his strength in a vain endeavour to do that singly, which requires the labours of many; he must aim at forming such an organization of his parish, as may enable him to do, through others, what he cannot do by himself; and reserve to himself the office of directing and of regulating their labours.

The first step to this, will be to excite in the more decidedly pious of his people, a steady spirit of Christian feeling for the souls of their fellow-creatures, that he may thus secure in them a body of agents, to whom he may delegate the office of visitors with confidence and satisfaction. When this blessing has been obtained, the rest will follow naturally. He will proceed to divide his parish into districts, and assign to each district its proper visitor, and to the visitors their specific line of duty. In forming this division, he may follow the plan which is so admirably traced out by Dr. Chalmers, in his *Christian and Civic Economy*, and

adopt that system so far as it may be suited to the local circumstances of his own position; or he may adopt a plan less formal, and in some respects of easier application, and assigning to those residents in his parish, on whose discretion and principles he can depend, a certain number of the poorer inhabitants in their immediate neighbourhood, he may request them to exercise statedly over these families that sort of superintendence which Christian feeling suggests, and which the respectability of their character may seem to justify their assuming. A plan in some measure resembling this has long been in operation in the city of Geneva, and probably was established there at the very period of the Reformation. The whole population is arranged under divisions which still bear the name of *dixaines*, and which, it is probable, originally, like our tithings, included only ten families. Each of these divisions has its appointed superintendent, and

weekly reports of the state of the inhabitants are made to the assembled clergy by the persons charged with their inspection.* It is equally obvious, from the duties still enforced upon our churchwardens and overseers, that a similar species of assistance was contemplated at all periods by our own church; and in this, as well as in other cases, we shall often find that nothing more is wanted than to follow out the original scheme, to adapt it to the change of manners and the increase of population, in order to make it meet all the exigences of the present moment.

There are many places where this mode of local division, for the purpose of superintendence, may be introduced with greater ease than the more general sys-

* It is interesting to know that the reports made of the twenty-one *dixaines* into which the city of Geneva is divided, are drawn up nearly on the same plan with that given in the *Speculum Gregis*. It is also interesting to remark, that the same species of

tem of district division. It may be carried into effect where the minister has not the power of accomplishing the other; and if it is found expedient to commence with this, it will be easy at any time, when circumstances are favourable, to graft the other system upon it, and to make this plan preparatory to one which shall be more full and perfect.

But in one way or other the thing must be done. The conscience of the minister must not be allowed to sleep under the neglect of duties, from the idea that they are impracticable; nor must he shrink from the attempt, because it will be necessary to admit the co-operation of others. It is possible that there may be some inconveniences attending this enlargement. Some dangers may be apprehended, some evils may arise; but what danger is there so much to be dreaded, as

parochial register was found among the exemplary Clergy, who have kept alive the flame of the gospel amidst the desolation and the snows of Iceland.

the loss of souls? or what evil can be put in competition with that of wilfully consigning to the consequences of ignorance and irreligion a large portion of those who are entrusted to his charge? But generally speaking, the dangers have vanished in proportion as they were approached. A moderate degree of prudence on the part of the minister, has averted the mischiefs which might have been apprehended; and while the anticipated evil has been trifling, the good produced has been abundant beyond expectation. The ignorant have been enlightened; the irreligious have been awakened; the sick have been comforted; multitudes have been brought back to those habits of religion and piety which are the only securities for happiness; and the most averse have been softened by this practical exhibition of the spirit of the Gospel of Peace.

The power to be delegated to visitors may vary according to circumstances;

but it may be expedient in these cases to give all that liberty to Christian feeling which does not interfere with ecclesiastical order. The Scriptures may be read and explained; tracts and books selected by the minister may be lent or distributed; information may be gained as to the means of education possessed, and information given as to the means by which deficiencies may be supplied; the sick may be comforted, and the intervals of the minister's visits be supplied by the calls and prayers of the visitor. In this way a general influence of religion may be diffused through all the parts of the parish, without any violation of the proper authority of the minister or his office, and all may be made to feel the bond of that communion by which they are connected.*

* This plan has been already adopted in several of our largest towns, either in parts or entirely. Sheffield, Birmingham, Brighton, Lancaster, may all be referred to at this moment, as exhibiting the ope-

It is hardly necessary to state the advantages which result to the parochial minister from this sort of co-operation. He not only collects in this way a degree of particular information, which it would be out of his power to obtain by personal exertion, but he likewise exercises a most important economy of time. Those hours which he might have felt bound to employ in reading to the sick and bed-ridden; those numerous calls which he might have been compelled to make, for the purpose of prosecuting any particular inquiry; those days which he must have passed in leading the ignorant to the first rudiments of knowledge, are by this division of labour reserved for the more specific duties of his office. He may thus feel in the retirement of his closet sanctuary, that his own work is being carried on by others; the prayers which

ration of a system, which above all others seems needed in the present state of our overgrown and closely peopled cities.

he utters in secret may be mingled with the many supplications, which are rising from those whom he has deputed to this work and labour of love ; and, unseen himself, he still may be the spring which sets at work a system, by which a whole parish is brought under the influence of the gospel.

Nor let it be forgotten, that the very employment of the visitors is, as far as they themselves are concerned, a most important spiritual benefit. Those who are aware of the difference that exists between passive impressions and active habits ; who know the fugitive nature of the first, and the necessity of introducing habits of practice, in order to give any thing like stability or reality to religious impressions, will feel that the adoption of a system such as this, tends more than any other measure to form and to establish the moral character of man. Those feelings of religion, which if they had not been embodied in action, might have led

to nothing, or perhaps might have ended in some morbid frame, gain strength, and firmness, and development as soon as they are brought into practice; and we may safely say, that bodily exercise does not contribute more to bodily health, than the practice of religious duties does to the soundness of religious feeling. Every person who is drawn into this course of occupation, derives from it a sort of security against error. His religion gains strength, his principles gain consistency by exercise; and while thus engaged in doing good to others, he soon experiences in his own heart the fulfilment of the promise, which says, "He that watereth, shall be watered also himself."

One other topic of parochial duty remains to be considered, and that is the visiting of the sick; unquestionably one of the most anxious and delicate parts of the ministerial office; but still not deserving that pre-eminence which is sometimes given it, as if it absorbed the whole

of the minister's attention. The fact is too certain to be denied, that men generally die as they have lived ; and those who for years have resisted the application of truth, are rarely touched by it effectually at the time of their departure. As long as life remains, hope continues to linger ; nor will any conscientious clergyman fail to redouble his efforts, at the moment when the object of his solicitude and prayers seems passing for ever from his sight. But though his struggles then will be increased by the circumstances under which they are being made ; he will have acted unwisely and presumptuously, if he has neglected such endeavours in former times, from any confidence of the assistance he is to derive from the effects of sickness on the mind.

Little, to speak in general, is to be expected on a sick bed, beyond the clearer exhibition, the livelier development of the principles which have been formed before. And though the limited

experience of most ministers can supply them with some instances to the contrary, instances sufficient to encourage the most earnest exertions ; it still cannot be denied, that if any one was to defer making these endeavours till sickness prepared the soul to receive them, he would generally find the heart closed against the perception of religious truth by habitual apathy, ignorance, or pride ; or prevented, through the influence of pain and disease, from lending even ordinary attention to it. Still, though the clergyman will feel that his church, his lectures, his confirmations, his schools, are his most hopeful fields of labour, he will not neglect the sick room. He knows that it is possible that some hearts, which have resisted his application in former days, may be subdued and open to receive it there. He well knows, that the grace of God sometimes uses the chastisement of sickness, as the means of humbling and awakening Christians ; and that he may

find the pride of the heart, and the levity of the mind, overcome by the terrors of the outward state. All this will encourage him to make the effort, or to renew the effort, with the hope that it may be now attempted, under circumstances more favourable than before. With regard to the visitation of the sick, we are left at perfect liberty, by the 67th Canon, as to the form to be made use of; but beyond the authority which the Liturgy possesses, there are few published forms which seem capable of more general usage than that in the Book of Common Prayer.* By addition of some parts of the Litany, by the introduction of other Psalms or portions of Scripture, adapted to the case, and by a slight modification of the language of the Collects in the service appointed, a form may be composed of easy and general application.

The chief difficulty of the work consists in awakening and directing the emotions;

* "Slade's Manual for the Sick" may be recommended.

which having long been dormant, are either prone to subside into habitual apathy, or to grow irregular in their struggles into life; and in this, the proper, the peculiar sphere of the clergy seems to lie. If the parish is large, and the minister's time much occupied, it is almost necessary to invite the assistance of others; and it seems desirable that district visitors, or even neighbours of approved piety, should be charged with the office of reading appointed parts of Scripture, or devotional works selected by the minister, and of praying with the sick; while he reserves for himself, and for the subject of his own visits, the discussion of those points which seem to be of a more delicate and specific kind; and prayer more peculiarly adapted to the case of the individual.*

In small parishes the minister's visits will naturally be more frequent; but it is

* See, on this point, "Lay Helpers," by the Rev. Thomas Sims.

probable, that in those which are large, his absence may be well supplied by the agency above named; and that, if his visits are rare, they will be *more valued and more impressive* from that very circumstance. In a service which more than any other requires that union of faithfulness and delicacy, which is the result of deep piety and long experience; where either extreme is to be avoided; where equal care is to be taken that the broken reed be not bruised, nor the smoking flax quenched, it is hardly possible to derive much assistance from books. The few pages given to it by Mr. Bridges are eminently useful. An old book called "The Sick Man Visited," by Spinckes, may supply a young man with some idea of the manner to be pursued; but otherwise he must be left to the guidance of his own heart and feelings; a guidance which is not likely to deceive him, if he does but add to natural sympathy for those whom he ad-

dresses, a sense of the incalculable value of the soul.* Under these impressions he will soon find, that the sick room is the place of study and spiritual observation; the place where he is to watch the workings of the conscience and the mind, and from whence he is to draw the most affecting and experimental parts of his knowledge.

* At this point, and indeed at other parts of this essay, it might have seemed natural to refer to a work lately published, under the title of *Death-bed Scenes*. The ability with which some of the dialogues are drawn up would have justified the reference, if there had not been graver reasons for refusing to recommend to the notice of the younger clergy a work which is open to many objections on the ground of doctrinal statements, and which exhibits a very unfortunate picture of ministerial activity. Without dwelling on the general spirit of the book, the views of the author on the subject of justification can hardly be reconciled with those of the Church of England; and the manner in which the administration of the Sacrament is described, seems replete with danger for an incautious imitator.

CONCLUSION.

THUS far an attempt has been made to sketch, however briefly and imperfectly, a plan of theological study and ministerial duty which seems capable of general adoption. Far from aiming at a portrait of all that might be wished for, or all that might be expected in a clergyman, the present essay must rather be regarded as a sketch of that average of attainments, and that average of exertion, to which every one may aspire, and below which no one should be contented to sink. Other works, which include a wider scope of study, or which take a more enlarged view of the subject,

may be regarded as tracing the character of the accomplished divine; of the man who is to stand forth as the champion of truth, and who is to meet and to stem the torrent of general irreligion or prevailing error. The object of this essay is merely to state the qualifications of one who is to carry on the work in the limited sphere of a parish; who is to be one of the many ranged on the side of God; and it is in consequence adapted to the means which are now possessed for clerical education, rather than to those which might be desired. It is the representation of what we feel may be done, rather than that of which we wish might be done. There are unquestionably other branches of knowledge, other attainments, on which it might have been desirable to insist; other features of character on which it might have been gratifying to dwell; but these are either to be found amply stated in books to which reference has been made, or will present themselves in the

course of inquiry to him who is seriously engaged in the pursuit.

For the present necessity therefore, for men whose period of education is curtailed by the expenses inseparable from residence in our universities; and who have not even there the means of learning all that they ought to know, this hasty sketch must be sufficient. To them it may convey some hints by which the precious interval of leisure may be improved, and their attention may be directed to points where it will be most advantageously employed. Still the real, the only efficient remedy for the deficiency complained of, must be sought for from the universities. To them is entrusted the education of those, who fill what are called the learned professions; and from the circumstances under which the clergy enter on the duties of their calling, the interval must be short which elapses between the time in which their knowledge is to be acquired, and that in which it is brought

into exercise. Unless some change, therefore, can be effected in the system of academical education, the great majority of the clergy must enter on the duties of their sacred office, with a degree of preparatory knowledge so inadequate to the important interests which will immediately devolve upon them, as must excite in every serious mind the liveliest feelings of anxiety and alarm. The character of the Church, it is true, may be vindicated by a few names of distinguished eminence, but the influence of the Church will be impaired, the progress of religious feeling will be retarded by the number of those who remain destitute of the necessary qualifications; and all the efforts made by some will be neutralized by the insufficiency which continues to exist in others.

To the universities, therefore, the appeal must be made, and the appeal must be repeated: and while all due acknowledgment is offered for the ardour with

which secular learning is prosecuted, and for the splendid bounty with which exemplary attainments are rewarded by them, they must be implored to compare the encouragement and assistance offered to the student of science, and that which is extended to him who is occupied with the study of divinity.

If an inference were to be drawn as to the relative value of the studies, from the provisions made for their pursuit, the comparison would place divinity below every thing that is dignified with the name of literature or science ; or else it would lead us to suppose, that the study which involves the future as well as the present happiness of mankind, was so simple as hardly to require cultivation.

That it includes much that is profound, as well as much that is obvious to the humblest capacity, no one who is conversant with the history of man, can pretend to doubt ; but on these grounds, how can the present neglect of the study

in our universities be accounted for? The advance of knowledge has discovered as many difficulties as it has removed. The mysteries of revelation still offer depths which no human intellect has fathomed; and the increase of acuteness in those who deny the truth, calls for a proportionate increase of knowledge on the part of those who are to maintain it. But the science which is beset with these peculiar difficulties, the science which alone extends its influence beyond the limits of this world, is the single science which remains in comparative neglect. On the mathematician, on the scholar, every ray of patronage is poured, every species of assistance is lavished. His industry is cherished, is directed, is rewarded with a liberality which deserves every encomium; and we might rejoice with a well-grounded pride over the encouragement bestowed on diligence in these studies, if the feeling was not checked by observing the comparative

neglect under which the study of divinity is pursued.

And yet the object for which our universities were established is unquestionably intimated in the phrase which describes them as sources of sound learning and religious education; nor is it possible to deny the fact, that in the minds of those who founded these magnificent institutions, the first of these ends was subordinate to the second; and that learning was chiefly desired, as offering the security and the means of religious improvement. The partial encouragement at present bestowed on literature, the indifference shown to the other study, are virtual departures from the spirit of the institutions, and involve forgetfulness of the very principle of their foundation.

But beyond this, if there is truth in the word which tells us that wisdom is the gift of God alone, and that no effort in its pursuit shall prosper if unblessed by Him; there is reason to fear that any

partiality which is shown, any disposition to forget that most important branch of knowledge which is occupied directly with the things of God, for the sake of other attainments, may carry the causes of its own failure in itself. There is reason to fear that learning may not flourish, at least that it may not produce its sweetest and most wholesome fruits, where religious education is neglected; that it may lead to the knowledge of things without rising to that higher degree of attainment which alone deserves the name of wisdom; and that God may withhold his blessing, where the paramount claims of his service are not acknowledged.

It would ill become any one to impeach on light grounds the wisdom of systems of education which have been long established, or to complain of any want of success, where it is unquestionable that so much has been done. Still less is it consistent with a spirit of friendly and dutiful remonstrance, to indulge in any

thing which sounds like taunt or accusation.

At the same time it is not to be denied that the exclusive attention which has been paid by one of our universities to mathematical study for nearly a century, has been comparatively unproductive; and that while all the energies of the mind have been tasked to their utmost, and been forced by every sort of excitement into one single channel, the great discoveries in science have been made in other places, and originated with men who were formed under other systems. The same remark may be applied with reference to other subjects, to the sister university; and while both have agreed in slighting the great science of the things of God, the question may be asked, whether this unbounded devotion to human literature has produced that pre-eminence in literary attainment which was expected; and raised this country above its competitors on the continent of

Europe ; or whether there is not reason to fear that the neglect of our Maker's claims may have withheld that blessing which alone gives efficiency to human exertions.

There is ground for hoping that the attention of our universities is already drawn to the subject, and that efforts are being made to facilitate and encourage the studies connected with the sacred ministry ; but it is requisite to bear in mind, that the nature of the case does not admit of delay, and that the necessity of some change of that sort is urgent. The general diffusion of education, and above all, the diffusion of religious knowledge imperiously requires a higher standard of education for the clergy. The irregular system of study which has hitherto been considered as sufficient for the candidates for orders, will not meet the growing demands of an intelligent, enlightened people. Well educated themselves, they will look for superior attain-

ments in those who are regarded as their spiritual guides ; and in proportion as they feel the value of religion, they will measure by a higher standard the qualifications of those who appear as its ministers. But there is no fact more important to be kept in mind by those who watch over the welfare of a country, than this ; that those who are to lead and to direct the feelings and judgment of others, must always be in advance of those who are to follow them ; nor will any system work well or last long, where its heads are not raised above the level of others in the qualities implied by their office.

A clergy, therefore, in order to maintain that influence which is essential to its usefulness, and ultimately to its existence, must rise above the standard of the people in professional knowledge, as well as in personal sanctity. Deficiency in either respect must produce a species of contempt, which, if it tends immediately to neutralize its powers of doing

good, will eventually lead to its destruction by impeaching its necessity. In a well educated community, it must be a highly educated body in order to ensure respect. In a religious community, it must be a devout and sacred body; and that moderate standard of moral or intellectual attainments which secured the pre-eminence of the clergy in the midst of the grosser habits and limited knowledge of old times, will not serve the same purpose when the general character of the nation is raised in either case.

But it is hardly possible to deny that in neither of the universities are those resources open, which the importance of the subject demands. In neither of the universities is that encouragement given to the study of theology, which might have been expected in institutions founded and endowed as they are. In neither of the universities is any adequate effort made to meet the growing call of the times, or to supply that specific instruction

for the sacred ministry, which seems essential to its influence. Lectures are given, but their scope is so limited, the attendance on them is so formal, that it would be idle to expect any real or general advantage from them; and while the young contrast the energy with which other studies are cultivated—the close, and accurate, and searching investigation with which progress in them is ascertained, with what they see in the divinity lectures, there is but one inference they can draw, as to the value attached to the different objects of pursuit.

Books no doubt exist, from which the student may derive almost all that it is essential for him to know; and it may be replied, that where these means of knowledge are to be had, it is unnecessary to be adopting any other mode of imparting the knowledge which is needed. But it would be injurious to the very character of an university to suppose, that the solitary, unassisted industry of an individual

superseded all its use or necessity. It was not without reason that the pious and enlightened men to whom we owe those magnificent institutions, collected into one point the scattered machinery of knowledge, and provided the means of ampler improvement by uniting all together. The multiplied powers of the press at present have not dispensed with the necessity which suggested that arrangement. Beyond the facility of getting books, we know that there are in the collision of minds, in the emulation of study, in the assistance of superior judgments, means of improvement, which no isolated application can equal; and the same principle which congregates the students in science, in law, or in the arts; invites the assemblage of all who are engaged in the study of divinity. In their case, as well as in that of others, beyond the obvious advantage of reading under the direction of persons of matured knowledge, and of profiting by the comparison

of mutual acquirements ; there are certain means of improvement to be found in a university, which can hardly be looked for in private life ; and these means it may confidently be stated, a university is bound to offer to all who are engaged in the studies preparatory for the ministry.

Among these, we might name first, increased facilities for the acquirement and cultivation of the original languages of the scripture, together with such regulations as shall ascertain the progress made in their study. Much time is saved in all studies like these, by beginning them under the direction of one who is thoroughly master of the subject. If this is not the case, the commonest idioms involve difficulties which occupy many precious moments for the unassisted student ; and what is worse, the fear of these difficulties deters many from attempting a work, which would have been begun without a question, if it had but been begun by authority.

Another advantage is that which may be derived from lectures on the different branches of divinity. It is idle to object to this, that books are already in circulation, which contain all that a course of lectures can convey ; for if this was a valid reason, it would impeach the wisdom of our whole academical system. The study of natural philosophy has not been neglected by the press at Cambridge ; and yet the zeal with which science is prosecuted there, renders all the numerous publications inadequate to the end they are aimed at, and requires the assistance of lectures to combine the information which is collected, or to present it in some form better adapted to the comprehension. And if this is deemed necessary in science, where the object of study is so simple, and every step in the process is the necessary result of previous demonstration ; it can hardly be neglected with consistency in a study like that of theology, where the materials for inves-

tigation are so widely scattered, and open to so much contradiction. If the mathematician too, from year to year finds it expedient to desert the beaten path, and adopt some new method of proof as more clear and convincing; it is not too much to expect that similar improvements may be continually introduced in the investigation of moral or religious truth; and that the skill of a lecturer may know how to adapt his argument to the intellects or feelings of his hearers, with an accuracy which cannot be expected in the author who writes for the world at large. The very multitude of books likewise which are already in circulation, renders some guidance necessary with regard to selection and discrimination. Each author has perhaps some merits of his own, which it may be desirable to notice; each has some bias; with which it may be important to be acquainted; one may be suited for one species of readers, another for another;

and the man who sits down to the study, without some directions to determine his choice, may find that he has been wasting his time on unprofitable speculations, or unconsciously been contracting notions from the influence of which it may not be easy to escape.

But beyond these, there are other advantages which belong more peculiarly to public institutions, and which are not to be looked for in retirement.

Among these, we might name oratory, or the power of expressing opinions with facility and distinctness. It is in vain to close our eyes against the growing necessity of this accomplishment, or to argue against its cultivation from its frequent abuse. Like every other power, it has been often and greatly misapplied: but while it possesses the character of power, it must be needed to support that cause of truth, against which such a combination of power is directed. In every country where popular assemblies have

weight, and the influence which man possesses, depends on the effect he can produce on the minds of others, this talent will be valuable; but to no class is it more generally necessary than to the clergy. In their public ministrations, whether they choose to exercise it regularly or not, it will impart a facility of improving or applying occasional events, which may be attended with peculiar usefulness, and may obviate some painful embarrassments. But there are other situations now, into which the clergy are continually called, and in which they are even compelled by a sense of duty to appear, where nothing but the possession of this faculty will enable them to appear with comfort to themselves, or with benefit to others.

And if these occasions are foreseen, it is right that they should be anticipated; nor should a clergyman be left to make trial of his strength, in arms which he has never proved. The object of his

education should be to prepare him for every duty to which he may be called on entering on the ministry ; and it is desirable that he should not quit the university, without having gained by exercise something of the self-possession and facility, which will qualify him for delivering his sentiments in public as a speaker.

In some theological institutions this exercise is carried on under the eye of the tutor, and each student is required to declaim before him on a given subject. For obvious reasons it is to be wished that the practice for clerical students should take place in this manner ; and it is to be hoped, that if it was considered as part of the stated course of study in the universities, it might tend to remove that confusion of ideas, and that embarrassment of speech, which frequently impair the usefulness of very able and devoted men, and might enable them to meet the calls of duty with alacrity and effect.

The assiduous labour which was bestowed on this accomplishment by the Romans, the incessant practice which is spoken of by Cicero and Pliny, as forming part of their domestic habits, show the value which they ascribed to exercise of the talent; and if it was but made a part of our regular system of education, it would cease to be considered, as it is at present, a gift which belongs exclusively to a few, but which is beyond the reach of all who possess no natural tendencies towards it.

This at least seems necessary to be borne in mind by those who preside over our seminaries of education, that it is not the amount of knowledge which man possesses, but the amount which he can produce, the amount he can render available, which really constitutes his usefulness; and that the work of education is only half accomplished, if it merely supplies ideas, without also adding the power of

expressing them with clearness and with force. But if the necessity of this exercise is doubted, as far as relates to public speaking, no question can be raised as to the necessity of exercise in recitation or reading. There are other parts of the ministerial office no doubt of much greater importance, than that of reading the church service in an impressive and appropriate manner; but there is none in which it is more generally open to remark; none in which it is more easily open to improvement. All, even the most illiterate of our hearers, perceive the difference between the effect produced by the Liturgy, when read with devotional feeling, and when it is hurried over with carelessness or irreverence; but few perhaps even of the clergy themselves, know the influence it possesses, when it seems breathed from the soul of the minister, and to come as the very language of his heart.

Teaching, it is true, will not give this. Instruction, exercise, rules for modu-

lating the voice, or raising the tone, can only imitate the effect which naturally belongs to deep spiritual feeling; but they may obviate many things that offend, they may prevent that inarticulate utterance which so frequently occurs in the case of studious and retired men; they may assist and regulate the expression of feeling, though they cannot produce it; and may thus prepare the clergy to conduct with more propriety their beautiful and unrivalled form of service. The reverence due to Scripture seems again to require that those portions which are read in church, should be read in a manner which may excite the attention, and aid the understanding of the hearers. The general circulation of the Bible has in some degree dispensed with the necessity, which probably induced the framers of our Liturgy to introduce so large a measure of Scripture into the service of Morning and Evening Prayer; but it is desirable that every member of the con-

gregation should be made to feel, that Scripture is heard with peculiar advantages, when heard in church; and that the tone and manner of the reader, is in harmony with the dignity of the truths which he is repeating. As to the importance of delivery in a sermon, no one can venture to doubt; and it is painful to think how much of knowledge and of piety are deprived of the effects which they ought to produce, through defects of manner, or faults of utterance, which might have been easily corrected by a few judicious hints in the course of education.

It is true, that these may be considered as trifling circumstances, if compared with the more essential qualities of the clerical character. But whatever they may be in themselves, they are not to be despised when viewed in reference to others. Far from being unimportant in this sense, they are actually the means on which the influence of more essential qualities depends. The piety of the officiating

minister can only communicate itself to his congregation, by the feeling which his tone in reading the prayers expresses. The portion of Scripture read in church, will derive its peculiar influence from the solemnity with which it is pronounced; and much of the value of every sermon will be lost, if there is nothing in the manner of its delivery to render it impressive. But to secure this accomplishment in general, there must be instruction, and there must be exercise. Few men are capable of discerning their own errors, fewer still of correcting them; and unless this can be done for them in the course of their preparation for the ministry, their usefulness will be diminished, and much edification must be lost.

To these we might also add, as another object to be attended to during residence in the university, the formation of a clerical character. Great benefit has unquestionably arisen from the manner

in which the clergy of the Church of England have been mixed among the laity. That line of distinction, which in Popish countries separates the priesthood from the body of the people; which seems to preclude the operation of the common sympathies of our nature; and which was designed to raise the sacerdotal class to a pre-eminence which no Christian minister would desire, has had no existence here. The clergy have been placed in the centre of the population, not “as Lords over God’s heritage, but as ensamples to the flock.” No other privileges have been assigned them, than those which are essential to the due discharge of their office. No power has been given them, except that which is spiritual; no influence, but that which sanctity of morals and general usefulness can add to the station which they fill.

By that blessing which usually accompanies the diligent use of means, it was possible that they might thus acquire an au-

thority, which no one would be willing to dispute, while it was only grounded upon affection, and was only exerted for the sake of doing good; but all that they could do among those around them, arose from the degree of their acceptance; and all the power they possessed, was a power conceded by those over whom it was to be exercised. In a word, the clergy of the Church of England have not been priests, but ministers. United with their brethren in one common fellowship of service, as well as in one common nature, their specific office has been that of stewards of the mysteries of God; their duty, that of giving to each of their fellow-servants, the measure of spiritual things which might be considered as his portion. But this peculiarity in their situation, which has led to so many benefits, which has checked all unreasonable pretensions of the one class, and raised the general tone of feeling in the other, by blending ministers and people together,

has not been without its dangers or its evils.

The clergy have sometimes shared too largely in the feelings of those by whom they were surrounded. They have been carried away by a stream which they were intended to check ; and though like salt they were scattered over the surface of society, in order to correct its tendencies by their influence ; it has sometimes happened that the salt has lost its savour by exposure, and that its peculiar qualities have been overpowered by those of the mass which it was mixed with. Even in cases where this has not occurred, it is still obvious that secularity—that conformity with the habits and views of the world in which their lot was cast,—must always have been a danger to which the clergy were peculiarly exposed. He knows little of man, who does not feel that moral sympathy is one of the most powerful agencies to which the human mind can be exposed ; nor

can we expect that any one should resist the contagion of an atmosphere which he is constantly breathing; unless he is guarded against its influence by a special system of precaution, in watchfulness, in meditation, and in prayer.

But part, and the most important part of this precautionary system, consists in the early habits of mind, in the tone of opinion, and the modes of life which are adopted at the age when the character is most ductile, and the feelings are being formed. The convictions of later life may unquestionably operate with such force, as to overcome the habitual levity of the mind, and to produce a line of conduct consistent with the sacred character of the clerical office; but it is not always that these convictions are effected, nor is their application so regular or so uniform, as to preclude the recurrence of many lamentable deviations. It is long before a reformed character becomes a consistent one. Early errors

produce irregularity even in the influence of truth ; and men who are awakened to serious feelings in later years, not only have to regret the opportunities which they have lost ; but they often find that their way is embarrassed by the effect of early errors, long after those errors have been detected and renounced.

In order then to ensure that consistency of character which is desirable in the clergy, and to obviate the various scandals and hindrances which arise from its absence, it is important that some steps should be taken to fix its tone and standard, while the student is yet residing in the university. It is not necessary for this purpose to withdraw him from society ; it is not desirable to give any austere or separate tone to his character ; but it does seem expedient that he should be called betimes to consider the nature of the office he is about to undertake, to remember the importance of the habits which he is forming, to anticipate the

duties and obligations of his future calling, and to avoid every practice which may tend to detract from his usefulness.

Nor let any young man revolt from this suggestion, as if it threatened the imposition of a yoke which would fetter the independence of his mind, or of a badge which would mark him out to any unpleasant observation. No other peculiarity is required or expected in the clerical character, than a stronger, a more decided exhibition of the qualities which constitute the real Christian ; no restraint is imagined, no habit of life is suggested, except such as has a tendency to increase and to secure their development ; and while we feel that there is in these a sweetness and an excellence, which engages the affections and commands the respect of all who contemplate them with impartiality, no fear need be entertained of the discipline which is recommended in order to promote them.

Whatever might have been the cir-

cumstances of a priesthood, there is obviously nothing in the Christian ministry, which is not compatible with, nay, which does not imply and require, the largest possible measure of all things lovely and of good report. The liveliness of youth, therefore, is not to be forbidden ; it is only to be regulated and softened. The affections are not to be checked ; the nobler feelings of the heart, the exercise of the imagination and the reason, are not to be prohibited ; they are only to be purified by the elevation given to them, and raised to a region where they may expand with safety and abide for ever.

There is nothing that adds dignity to the character, or sweetness to life, which is not directly encouraged and promoted by the habits which it would be important to recommend for this purpose ; and if the account could be fairly stated, of the usages which it was necessary to resign in order to produce this early consistency of character ; it is certain

that every man of common sense and common feeling would admit, that nothing was excluded except that which he himself perceived to be low and degrading in its tendencies ; nor any thing required, except that which added dignity to his character, and contributed immediately to the peace and tranquillity of his mind. Without making any allusion, therefore, to those indulgences which are confessedly of a vicious nature, and which every Christian will be anxious to avoid ; the chief difference which it might be desirable to see in those who were intended for the ministry, should be a gradual assimilation of the youthful character to that which belongs to their profession ; a calmer frame of mind, a more meditative and serious tone of character, a retirement from the frivolous and absorbing amusements of the world, an early cultivation of pious and devotional feelings, a careful selection of associates whose views and habits should

be in decided accordance with their own. This might be considered as forming the natural preparation for the future ministers of the gospel. In these things they would begin to taste betimes that sweetness of religion, which gives warmth and energy to its offices. By these means they would keep themselves unspotted from the world; and from a youth thus regulated, thus sanctified, and thus protected, they might pass to the work of the ministry, blameless in the opinion of the world, free from its fetters, and untouched by its pollutions.

There can be no doubt that timely and serious attention to these points, however trivial they may seem, might obviate many painful and overwhelming recollections, and remove many hindrances to future usefulness; and that in this way, an influence, which consistency of character, and seriousness of behaviour can give even to the young, might be obtained for that period of the ministry which is na-

turally deficient in experience or authority. But beyond the advantage which may be derived from this source with regard to the ministry ; there is a degree of professional character, a peculiar combination of feelings and of habits which it is desirable to form in the clergy for their own sakes, for the sake of that respect which is due to their office, and the comfort which arises from consistency between manners and profession. The office which the candidate for the ministry contemplates is peculiar ; the duties which he will have to perform, the place which he will have to fill in society, all are peculiar ; and it seems naturally to follow, that there should be something peculiar in the general habits of his mind and conversation, in order to preserve consistency with the situation he must occupy. The peculiarity too in his case is of a sacred character, and the very circumstances which constitute the difference between his case and that of other

men, arise out of his connexion with the service of God, and derive their specific character from thence.

He must remember therefore, in every position and at every moment of his life, whose he is, and whose work he is engaged to do ; and he must endeavour to avoid, not merely those acts which are inconsistent, but those likewise which would be unbecoming. The levity of manner, the coarseness of habits, which in other professions might excite no remark, should therefore be carefully avoided in this ; or rather, a strong and lively sense of duty should produce that propriety of demeanour in his case, which arises from a sense of expediency in that of others. His private habits, his personal appearance, his ordinary recreations, his tone of language, must all be regulated by a more scrupulous sense of propriety than is exercised in other cases.* He must always bear in mind, that whatever may be the

* Isaiah lii. 11.

disposition to note inconsistencies in other men, there is a kind of morbid acuteness in perceiving the errors or indiscretions of a clergyman ; and that many who are incapable of appreciating the excellencies of his character, will be capable of observing any incorrectness which may seem to justify their indifference or opposition. But it is not easy to assume at once a propriety, which extends to every part of the behaviour, and obviates every sort of indiscretion. Generally speaking, this cannot be accomplished at all, unless it is begun betimes ; and that calm and gentle tone of manners, that mild and sanctified conversation, which we feel to be peculiarly adapted to the Christian minister, can hardly be expected, except as the result of a long continued discipline during early life. The attempt to assume this suddenly at the time of ordination, though a praiseworthy, may frequently be an ineffectual, effort. Early habits have then generally gained an in-

fluence which it is not easy to shake off; and the violent struggles made to break loose from the world, and to adopt a line of conduct in harmony with the office, generally involve consequences painful to the individual who makes them, and injurious, for a time, to the moderation of his spirit. But those changes which are then produced with so much difficulty, are effected with comparative ease in the retirement of a college. At a distance from the associations of early life, in a place eminently favourable to reflection and to liberty of choice, a young man may there gradually form the character of his future office, and, unobserved and unopposed, may assume the tone and manners of one who must soon be called “to reprove, to rebuke, to exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.”

In this way he may emancipate himself from the influence of domestic connexions, and begin to assert and to secure that respect which is essential to his usefulness ;

and thus, with no violence done to his feelings, with no attempt at obtaining premature authority, he may gradually grow into the proper dignities of his office, and allow no man to despise a youth which presents itself in the seriousness and piety which form the proper qualities of the ministry.

In touching on these minor points, we must not forget the simplicity of habits, the indifference to external things, and superiority to worldly comforts, which are implied in the ministerial character, and which every clergyman must aim at. It was a striking, and an important admonition, which Paley addressed to the younger clergy of his archdeaconry, when he said to them, “Learn to live alone.” That acute observer knew that it was a rule, the observance of which would contribute much to their usefulness, much to their independence, much to their respectability. But we must also feel that it is a rule, which they will hardly be able

to admit, unless they have been prepared for its observance by habits of meditation, of study, and of retirement. A young man who passes at once from the excitement of society, or even from the cheerfulness of domestic life, to the solitude of a country curacy, is exposed to trials from within and from without, which no one can contemplate with indifference. His mind, in such circumstances, too often sinks under the change ; and he either is overpowered by languor, or is driven to some unworthy resource, in order to escape from a burden which overwhelms him.

It would have been well if the individual, before he exposed himself to it, had sat down, and having counted the cost of the work he was undertaking, had prepared his mind for the trial by previous discipline, and the formation of a spirit which could bear it. If, for instance, he had gained in the course of his college life, something of the firmness

and zeal of the missionary ; if he had accustomed his mind to dwell much and long on the consolations belonging to the work he is engaged in ; if he had become familiar with the resources which he needed, and had tasted their abundance and sufficiency, he would not have drooped in the solitude where his ministry was to be exercised ; nor would he have been driven prematurely to seek for those domestic consolations, which frequently impair the usefulness of a minister by the anxiety connected with an unprovisioned family.

As it is, the younger clergy too often seem to forget the wise caution of the apostle, when he says, “ But I would have you without carefulness.” Inexperienced and unthinking, they do not foresee the burden which they are bringing on themselves, and the complicated trials they are preparing for their faith, by early and improvident marriages ; and from impatience of the loneliness of their

new condition, hastily seek a resource, which in many cases compromises their peace of mind and independence for the future. It is surely unnecessary to prove, that the Gospel which inculcates entire dependence upon God in the trials to which we are called, never encourages imprudence or unnecessary exposure to difficulties; and while it is obvious that in this case men frequently incur a long and overwhelming burden of anxiety, in merely flying from the weariness of solitude; there is reason to hope that a more exalted tone of piety, a frame of mind more raised above earthly comforts, and more accustomed to seek and to find its happiness in God alone, might in many cases raise our clergy above the sense of those privations from which they can hardly escape with prudence.

Beyond these advantages to be derived from the formation of a clerical character in those who are intended for the ministry, we might also mention those which

result from sympathy and union among themselves, and which the increase of professional feeling would strengthen and enlarge. It is in the power of every old and established clergyman, to render great and peculiar assistance to his younger brethren in the ministry; and the good which he can do, he is bound for his Master's sake to attempt, towards all his fellow-servants. The experience which every man of advanced life has gained, his knowledge of men and books, probably will enable him to offer some useful hints to those who are just entering on the ministry. But besides these, the very circumstance of possessing a settled home, something more or less of domestic society, enables such persons to offer to the lonely and unfriended curate, that sort of support and relaxation, on which the cheerfulness of his mind and the usefulness of his ministry may materially depend.

But from all, of every age and of every

degree, that measure of co-operation and of help must be expected, which men, engaged in the same work, serving the same Lord, struggling under similar difficulties, are bound to offer to each other. Even in common Christian society, no man liveth for himself. Whatever means he may possess, he possesses not for his own purposes, but for the good of others. But this feeling, which holds good with regard to all in its general sense, must be supposed to have a still closer and more particular application to those who, like the clergy, are engaged in one office ; fellow-servants of God, and fellow-workers ; and who know that the success of their common labours must depend, in no ordinary degree, on the union which exists among themselves.

On this account, every thing which tends to strengthen this spirit of union is not less to be encouraged than the very feeling from which it proceeds. The assemblage of the clergy at the stated

periods of visitations, may be rendered useful in this view by the acquaintance they produce, and the intercourse to which they give occasion. Other clerical meetings of a private kind, either monthly or quarterly, and under regulations which may be adapted to local circumstances, but which shall give a religious character to the conversation, are found to conduce to the same result, the increase of friendly feelings and religious union. By means such as these, knowledge is easily communicated, groundless prejudices are abated, the monotony of a secluded parochial residence is broken; and all men may hope to derive that encouragement in labour, and that wholesome excitement of mind, which it has pleased our bountiful Creator to connect with social intercourse.

I have thus far traced, faintly and imperfectly, some of the means by which

the usefulness of our parochial clergy may be enlarged, and the high duties of their sacred calling may be more efficiently discharged. My chief qualification for the office has consisted in a knowledge of the deficiencies which exist at present, and in a deep and earnest desire that they should be removed. Nor in doing this, if I am conscious of my own motives, am I swayed by a merely professional feeling, by zeal for the order of which, however unworthy, I am a member, nor by jealousy for the interests of the church as by law established. My views, I trust, have a much wider and more extensive scope than this, and one which may justify every effort that can be made for its attainment. I cannot but feel, that, with all its defects, defects in part inseparable from a human institution, and in part resulting from the circumstances under which the Reformation was brought about, the Church of England has been the means of incalculable good to the

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country. I believe that it only requires a more perfect realization of its scheme, a more general adaptation to circumstances, in order to accomplish as much of good as we are permitted to expect in this world. I believe that its scheme of parochial division, its gradation of orders, its provision for the discharge of duty, and its system of superintendence, enable it to offer to every part of the community as ample means of edification as can be expected from any national church. I believe that, amidst the variety of extreme opinions, its doctrines approach nearest to the golden moderation of truth, and are most exactly conformable to Scripture. I believe that, beyond every other system of religion, it is calculated to embrace and unite men of all sentiments, and is thus suited to combine together, in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace, the population of the country at large.

I believe then that any measure which tends to raise the character and to increase

the usefulness of the parochial clergy, tends equally to promote the welfare of the nation; for, to borrow words which carry conviction with them, “If our beloved country ever retains its greatness and its comforts, they will be preserved to her by religion alone; and of religion the principal instruments must always be the parochial clergy.”*

But in order to render the parochial clergy universally what they ought to be, in order to make them the channels of spiritual light, and spiritual comfort, and spiritual good, to a population such as ours; there must be an increase in the general attainments of the body. It is necessary that all must be what many now are. The standard must be raised; the character must be elevated; and attainments and qualities must be possessed, which shall meet the demands, and command the respect, of an enlightened, active people. The means which are

* Bishop of Chester's Charge. 1829.

now offered for this purpose are obviously inadequate. More is left to the voluntary efforts of the individual than it is just or safe to do ; and those great seminaries of learning where the education for the ministry is carried on, seem to have been hitherto so much occupied with other branches of knowledge, as to have forgotten the necessity of making any specific provision for this, at least any provision proportionate to its consequence. It surely is hardly necessary to remind these eminent and enlightened bodies of the great and glorious trust which is committed to their charge. It is surely unnecessary to repeat to them, that the destiny of the nation lies in their hands, and depends on the impulse given to the intellect, and the bias impressed on the principles of the rising generation.

But it may perhaps be permitted to add, that it is not science, that it is not literature, that it is not the intellectual improvement of the higher ranks in so-

ciety, which gives stability to national welfare, or constitutes the real happiness of a country. These brilliant attainments reach only to a few, and cannot and do not extend to the real wants of human kind. Beyond the power of these therefore, and below the level of their operation, exists a depth of misery, a depth of restless, craving, and contagious misery, which nothing can allay, nothing can cure, but the application of the gospel. That salt alone will heal those bitter waters, and change that barrenness of soil ; but in order that its application may be general and effectual, it must be conveyed through the hands of an enlightened and well-informed, as well as zealous and devoted clergy. The materials already exist. Our universities abound in intelligence, in activity, in diligence, in knowledge. All that can be wished for is, that the highest interests of men may obtain the preference which is due to them ; and

that the studies which are directed to their advancement may be cultivated with the care and assiduity they deserve.

THE END.

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